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A Tour
Through the Famine Districts
of India



PLAGUE SIGNS.

A Tour Through the Famine Districts of India

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BY

F. H. S. MEREWETHER

REUTER'S SPECIAL FAMINE COMMISSIONER

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To the Mother

WHO BORE ME, AND WHO HAS BORNE WITH MY VAGARIES
FOR MORE YEARS THAN I CARE TO COUNT, THESE
RECENT EXPERIENCES OF HER WANDERING BOY
ARE AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED

BY THE AUTHOR.

Savage Club, Nov. 1897.

PREFACE

THIS book to any one expecting a mere collection of the horrors of the Indian Famine will be a bitter disappointment. Our great Eastern dependency is passing through a crisis which has been death-dealing and far-reaching in its effect upon the suffering millions of Ind. The author has, as far as possible, merely hinted at the awful and gruesome sights and scenes which it was his lot to witness, and which certainly any word-painting of his would fail to accurately portray. He has relied upon a series of photographs taken upon the spot, to bring forcibly before the mind's eye of his readers, if any, the state and condition of the oriental races who owe their allegiance to the Queen-Empress. This volume is the mere journalistic record of a man who travelled through the length and breadth of the Famine Districts of India; in which he has endeavoured to depict, with perhaps too light a brush, the various scenes that came under his personal observation. He has gathered up from various and numerous sources a mass of information—useful or otherwise—and this he now, with all diffidence, puts into the hands of the public. It has been too the object of the writer to relegate, as far as lay in his power, the dry-as-dust statistics, which are the natural outcome of such an enormous undertaking as the Famine Relief of India,

to the obscurity of the Appendices. Should even one heart be touched and one purse-string loosened for the benefit of the naked and starving myriads of Hindustan, the author of this work will feel that his reward is far greater than he deserves.

THE AUTHOR.

Savage Club,
Nov. 1897.

A small portion of the matter herein has already seen the light in a series of articles contributed to the *Times of India*, and the Author begs here to express his thanks to the Editor for his courtesy in permitting the use of this material, which has been incorporated in the present work.

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THROUGH THE FAMINE DISTRICTS

PART I

THE BOMBAY PRESIDENCY

CHAPTER I

BOMBAY

Urbs prima in Indis is the proud motto which its citizens claim for Bombay the Beautiful. It is the front door of India, as Aden can only be looked upon as the garden-gate leading to our vast Eastern possessions. Any one approaching from the sea cannot fail to be struck with the beauty of the islands and their surroundings. The island of Bombay, or, as the natives call it, Mambé, is flat with the exception of the Cumballa and Malabar Hills. The latter trends upward till it culminates in Malabar Point—the cold-weather residence of the Governor. The tropical foliage, the palms which stand up against the sky-line on the hills, and hide, in the lower ground below, the populous quarter of Girgaum, add to the charm, while the background formed by the deep red ghauts across the harbour gives a picture which impresses itself indelibly on the mind of the traveller, to whom the glories of the sunny East

have hitherto been more or less of a sealed book. The public buildings which line the shore and which face you on approaching Bombay, though somewhat bizarre and incongruous in detail, if taken as a whole form a pleasing view. The whole scene is enhanced during the rains by the bright green of the Maidans, amidst which the great public buildings and Government offices stand enframed. The picturesque thatch bungalows of the Marine Lines in the foreground form too a striking contrast to the massive buildings behind.

These old relics of a bygone time have, however, since the plague devastated the city, been razed to the ground, and their sites present now a series of immense rubbish heaps. The whole quarter, by orders of the Government, has been demolished and burnt. Apart from the inconveniences and the perpetual growls of the inhabitants, these old bungalows marked an epoch and formed a landmark in the history of Bombay, the removal of which the conservative lover of the antique will deplore. Sanitary science, alas, is a stern task-master, and will brook no interference from insanitary and dilapidated picturesqueness.

The fiat went forth, and at one fell swoop the dear old Marine Lines passed away. Many and pleasant are the associations with these time-worn and worm-eaten homes; and the messes of the Marine Light Infantry and the native Bombay Regiment will no longer re-echo with the merry voices of the gay subaltern and his friends. We shall probably have some solid stone, *pucca*-built quarters, which will be as ugly as the old bungalows were pleasing to the eye. How many joyous evenings have we not spent in these old homes! Never again shall we lounge after dinner in the long chair,



THE MARINE LINES.

dear to the Anglo-Indian, and listen to the *gup* of the passing hour. This is, however, mere digression, and memory must not be allowed too full a sway.

Bombay has earned another title to our respect, and may be justly called Bombay the Busy. With its immense and beautiful harbour, to which ships of all nations are attracted by the export trade, the scene presented is an animated one. The contrasts too between the various craft thronging the vast land-locked bay, which forms one of the best harbours of refuge in the world, are very great. Here, owing to the high tides which prevail, the largest ships of our navy can not only ride at anchor in the stream, but enter if necessary the series of docks which line the shore. You may see the huge battleship or Peninsular and Oriental mail-steamer, with all the latest appliances of modern naval science, cheek-by-jowl with the rough and clumsy native *buggla*, with its high bulwark of interlaced bamboo and its huge and unwieldy lateen sail. Amidst all this great mass of shipping, the small tonies or dug-outs, manned by a couple of bronze-coloured natives with their primitive paddles, dart to and fro. In the afternoon, when the heat has somewhat decreased, the white sails of the dainty yachts, owned by the sahibs of the Yacht Club, skim the deep blue surface of the bay. The Bombay Harbour, when seen in the rose-light of the declining sun, with the setting of the ghauts of the mainland in the background, is a memory of the beautiful which the beholder cannot fail to treasure as a new experience.

One of the first things that strikes the new-comer is the enormous mass of humanity which throngs the streets of the city; which crowd is intensified tenfold in the native quarters of the town. This heterogeneous

collection of all sorts and conditions of men, the snowy-white clothed Parsee and Bania, the swarthy Arab, the yellow-skinned Chinaman, the stalwart Mahommedan, the statuesque coolie, form, with the gay-coloured sarees of the female portion of the crowd, a kaleidoscopic picture which is alike pleasing to the eye and bewildering to the brain.

It is the people, the variegated throng of picturesque humanity, which after all remains as one of the first and indelible impressions of Bombay. The submerged tenth live and have their being in the open air. In the native quarters at night the footway is simply impassable, owing to the masses of shrouded natives who use it as their sleeping-place. In the vicinity of the Crawford markets and in the quarter of Cammatepura they simply line the pavement, and wrapped closely in their dirty-white *chuddahs*, look like bales of merchandise. But the destroying angel of the plague altered all this. In streets where even towards midnight it was impossible, owing to the crowds, for a *ticcagharry* to proceed beyond a walking pace, a battery of artillery might have galloped in safety down the now deserted thoroughfare. I went on a tour of inspection when the disease was at its height, and found whole streets in the busiest portion of the native town practically deserted. The shops were all closed, and the occupants had disappeared *en bloc*. It was calculated at that time that nearly two-thirds of the inhabitants had fled from the pest-stricken island to the mainland. This enormous exodus on the part of the people did incalculable harm to the Presidency, and without doubt caused the spread of the fell disease into the country districts of the province.

At a later period on my tour, I found in one remote

village of the Konkan that more than forty people had died of the plague which had been imported by a sufferer from Bombay.

The hardships and discomforts entailed upon the European residents of Bombay during the reign of the pestilence can scarcely be conceived except by those who were not only eye-witnesses, but actual sufferers from the panic caused to the natives by the epidemic. People at home have no idea of how dependent the Anglo-Indian is upon the cloud of dark-skinned servants who minister to his necessities and anticipate his slightest needs. The plague brought this home very clearly to those who were obliged to remain in the city. I arrived one day at the Yacht Club for tiffen, and found that with the exception of three who had remained faithful to their salt, the whole posse of servants had fled. It was a somewhat droll sight to see reverend judges, potent collectors and brave generals, foraging round promiscuously for means wherewith to stay their appetite or assuage their thirst. With the happy *insouciance* which characterizes the Englishman in India, the whole affair was treated as a huge joke, and a merry and impromptu picnic was the result.

Another instance will show to what degree of discomfort those who stuck to their guns were put. A friend of mine who lived in a flat in the fort was deserted by his retainers with the exception of an ancient Portuguese cook; and for days he and his wife had to do their own house-work. The *bobachi* agreed to cook, but absolutely refused to bring the things to table or wash up afterwards, and he was the master of the situation. The sahib and his wife had to arrange that for themselves. This, with the thermometer standing in

the immediate neighbourhood of eighty degrees in the shade, is no mean undertaking for delicately nurtured Europeans. They stood it for some time, but at last turned tail and fled for refuge to an up-country hotel.

In the earlier stages of the epidemic the municipality attempted the disastrous plan of concealment; and it was mainly owing to the fearless policy and tone of the *Times of India* in laying bare the actual facts of the case, and especially in tracing the abnormal mortality to its true cause, that the Government was forced to take the strenuous repressive measures it subsequently did. If from the first the nettle had been grasped firmly, and a cordon established round Bombay, the disease would not have attacked Kurrachee nor been so widespread as it eventually became. The Plague Committee which the Government too tardily formed, had it been in existence sooner, would doubtless have achieved at an earlier stage a still more brilliant success. With such popular and indomitable chiefs as General Gatacre and Dr. Pollen, the dread monster would have been sooner quelled.

It was some time before it was fully recognized that the plague, of which we had heard such gruesome tales from Hong Kong the previous year, was really and definitely in our midst. To all appearance it had come to stop; and the city and authorities were more or less panic-stricken at the thought. There is very little doubt that in the earlier stages numerous cases were diagnosed as pneumonia, and the cause of death attributed to that malady, while the real *fons et origo mali* was plague pure and simple. As time went on, experts began to flock into Bombay from all the known quarters of the



A HOTBED OF PLAGUE.

habitable globe, and were busy from morn till eve in the laboratories cultivating bacilli in bouillon. Chemists, scientists, bacteriologists, experts, were as plentiful in our city as leaves on Vallombrosa. The theories started were practically endless. To one it was sea-borne—to another earth-borne—to another water-borne—to another land-borne. To another, since it began in Mandvie, the centre of the wheat and seed bazaar, bad grain was its alma mater. To another rats were the culprits;—in fact, *Quot homines tot sententiæ.* The daily papers teemed with letters, scientific articles, theories; and yet the plague calmly pursued the even tenor of its way and decimated the population. Eventually, after almost endless discussion and ventilation of the matter, it was unanimously agreed that filth and want of sanitation were, if not the actual germinants, at any rate all-important factors in the spread and propagation of the epidemic. The fiat went forth that cleanliness was as good if not better than godliness, and we set to work, one and all, to purge, purify and whitewash Bombay the Bubonic.

The slums of the city, even to one not ignorant of the homes of the submerged tenth in our own metropolis, are a new and terrible experience. The quarters of the lower and poorer classes of the natives in Bombay are scarcely to be described. One instance will serve: A party of volunteers with a hose were washing and disinfecting a *chawl* (native tenement house), the only entrance to which was down a gully (in the centre of which ran an open drain), so narrow that one could with difficulty squeeze through. At the end of this was a rat-hole of a place, pitch dark, and about eight feet square. The hose was turned on, and fearful and

diabolical yells arose in the far corner of this black-hole of Bombay. A light was brought, and an old woman, a mere bundle of rags, was discovered crouching in the corner, and emitting a stream of ear-splitting screams. The place was entirely without means of light or ventilation, and the state of affairs revealed by the lantern was simply indescribable. There were a couple of old battered cooking pots; and this kennel which one would have offered with some feelings of compunction to a pariah dog, had served this ancient beldame as a home, in which she had lived, slept, cooked and fed for several months past. This is only one solitary instance, but 'twill serve. Can one therefore be surprised that the bubonic plague, which is supposed to be the outcome of defective sanitation, should have taken such a hold upon the city when it can find such places as the above in which to batten, fester and ferment.

Government at last took in hand what the municipality, with all its vaunted ideas of progress and the advance of civilization, had been found absolutely incapable of coping with. Such a crisis required a Cromwell, and the man arose in General Gatacre, who, as President of the Plague Committee, took the bull by the horns. The measures adopted, aided by the advent of the hot weather, succeeded in eventually scotching the pest. The Angel of Death, however, had been very busy in our midst, and the mortality had been enormous. When a case occurred or proved fatal, a circle was placed on the door-post of the house, and in one house alone the number of rings shown adds up to forty-three. There was also an *oart* or square where this number was exceeded. It is without my province to describe the various scenes and episodes that took place in Bombay

during the raging of the plague. Suffice it to say that all the open spaces and lungs of the city were devoted to the hutting and housing of the various castes and peoples. Hospitals sprung up on all sides like mushrooms in a single night. The wail of the mourners was heard on every side, and one could not pass down a street without meeting one or more funeral procession. The burning ghauts were strained to their utmost capacity, and the Mahommedan burial-grounds could not hide beneath the earth sufficiently fast the Moslem victims. On Mahim sands, if in ordinary times you ride out there in the early morning, you may generally find the dying embers of one fire. In the times of the plague the whole sea-shore was clothed with the fires of innumerable funeral pyres. People who have lived through these times can scarcely refrain from shuddering at the sad thoughts and remembrances which memory recalls.

The plague in Bombay has left an almost indelible mark upon the commerce and enterprise of that aforetime thriving commercial centre. The export, and indeed the import trade has dwindled to almost nothing, while the check to the native mill industry has been such that it will take some years to recover. God grant that the dread disease has made its final exit, and may not be recurrent. There are, however, great fears that the present monsoon will see a recrudescence of the fell epidemic. Let us hope that the exponents of this theory will prove false prophets.[1]

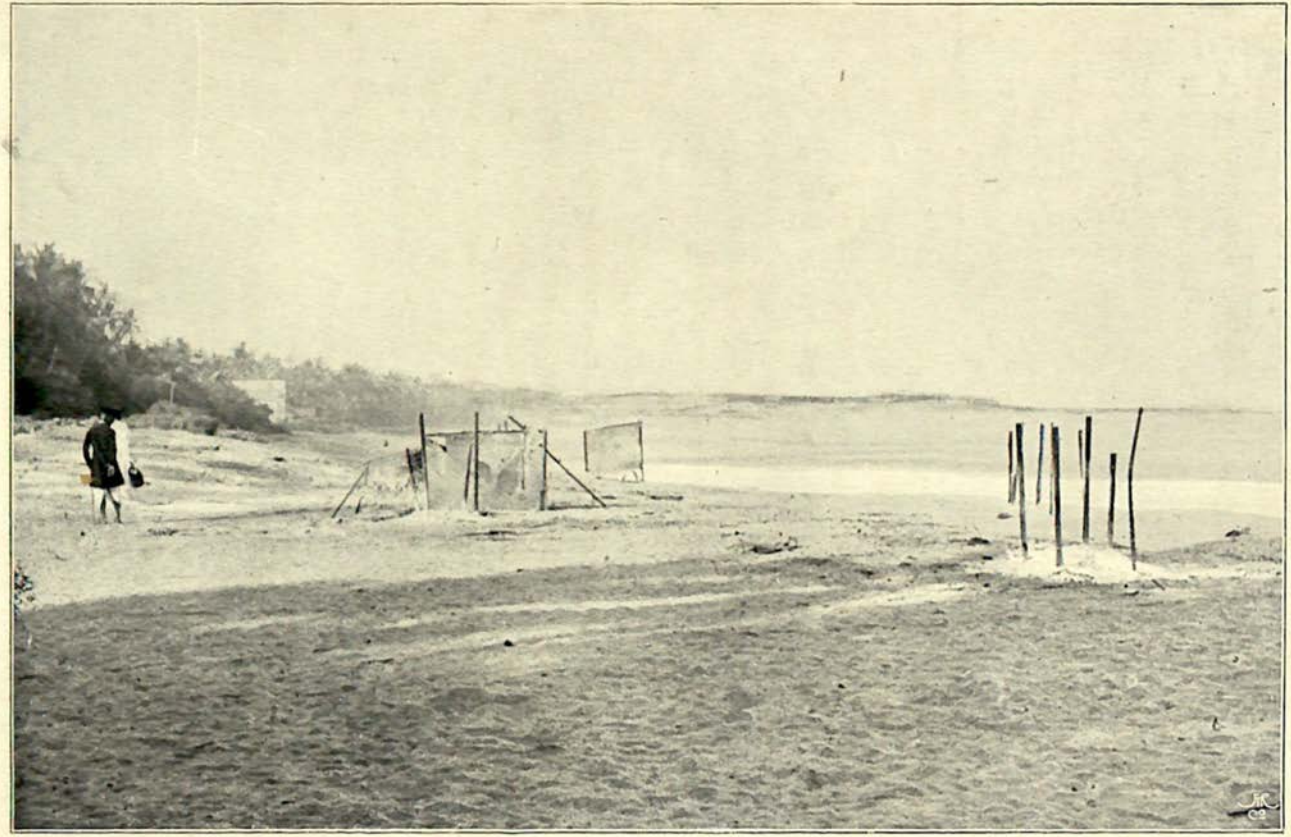
[1] I regret to say that since this was written, from advices received from Bombay, the plague has shown strong signs of recrudescence, and in addition to this, that cholera has broken out in the native quarters of the doomed city. The death-roll has again risen, and the arrival of the monsoon has not tended to mitigate the evils.

CHAPTER II

THE START

ON the thirteenth of January in this present year I was at Santa Cruz, assisting at a function of the banquet description, given by the jovial sportsmen of Bombay who compose the Jackal Club. Even though plague be raging in the city, the young and ardent of the European contingent must kill something, and the pursuit with horse and hound of the wily jackal in the plains and jungles of Salsette affords at this season of the year the handiest means of breaking your neck.

Every "cold weather" a camp is formed about twelve miles from Bombay, and here the hounds meet twice a week in the grey and early dawn. Many of us prefer on the eve of hunting-days to sleep out there under canvas; and this will account for my presence in the camp. While at dinner, a belted *chupprassie* of the *Bombay Gazette* silently crept to my side and thrust a note into my hand, saying—"Answer wanted, sahib." Thinking that it was a mere request for more copy, or some trifle of that description, I ordered the man to *baito*—i. e. sit, wait—and went on with the more important business of dining. When I opened the note I found the following—



BY THE SAD SEA WAVE.

(Burning Plague Patients on Mahim Sands.)

"DEAR M.

"Reuter wants a man to do the Famine; if you care for the job, see W.—Yours, G. C. P."

W. was Reuter's manager, and the note was from the editor of the *Bombay Gazette;* so telling the messenger, *Tumara sahib ko bahut salaam-bolo*—which being interpreted means, "Tell your sahib I have received the chit, and am much obliged, and will see about it when I have any spare time,"—and a few other things of that sort, which the florid imagination of the messenger may dictate, I turned in.

Since the failure of the monsoon the previous September, we in India had been fully aware that a very intense and extended famine would result. The Indian papers had already sent out their "Own Specials," and the Lord Mayor's Fund at home was rolling up daily. The English press, however, had as yet taken no steps, and their supineness was a matter of surprise to the coterie of press-men in Bombay. In the famine of 1876, India was flooded with a crowd of English correspondents, and the Press Commissioner, whose office had not been abolished in those days, was worked off his legs in his attempts to please all parties. By parenthesis, judging from the sedition which at the time of this writing is rampant in various centres of the Bombay Presidency, a censorship of the native press would not only be expedient, but seems an absolute necessity. The reorganization of this important office would be a right step in the direction of repressing the hot-headed fanatics who are stirring up sedition.

The sad murder of my poor friend Lieutenant Ayerst, and the death of Mr. Rand, have led me into this

digression, but let me get back to my own personal affairs. I called upon the manager of Reuter the next morning, and having settled matters to our mutual satisfaction, it was determined that I was to travel through the districts in India affected by famine, and from the chief centres send telegrams to England, reporting upon the state of affairs.

It did not take me long to arrange my business, so that the world should not cease to revolve during my absence, and the following evening, in company with my faithful servant Domenico, I started by the mail-train to Poona, in search of famine.

In concluding this chapter, I beg leave to crave a slight indulgence from my readers, if any. I hope that they will pardon the too-oft recurrence of that wretched unit, the personal pronoun I. Please remember that these are the personal experiences of a man who, like Ulysses, saw many lands and peoples during his wanderings; and so free me from the charge of egoism, and accept my account as what has been heard and seen by Reuter's Special Correspondent.

CHAPTER III

SATARA

WITH my start by the Poona Mail, on January 15, began my peregrinations in search of famine and starvation, which led me to a tour through India of some 4500 miles in extent and some seven weeks in duration. By the help of my friends and colleagues of the *Times of India*, I had mapped out a route to which I more or less adhered in my travels. It had been decided that I should first exhaust the possibilities of the Bombay Presidency, and having heard that there was great scarcity prevailing in the Southern Mahratta country, I made Satara, an important cantonment at the foot of the Mahableshwar hills, my first point of attack. Arriving at Poona in the early dawn, I had just time to dash across to the station of the Southern Mahratta Railway, and take my place before the train crept out of the station. After the roomy carriages and huge engines of the G. I. P.,[1] those of this line, which is constructed on the metre gauge, seemed a mere toy. They were however to be more or less my home for the next ten days, and I got quite to love their tiny daintiness. After having passed Wathar, the station at which you disembark when *en route* to the hill-station of Mahableshwar, to which the Government goes for the

[1] Great Indian Peninsular.

hot weather, we shortly after noon ran into the station of Satara Road. The city is about ten miles distant, and is accessible by means of *dawk tongas;* I shall have to make frequent use of the term *dawk*, so I may as well here explain it. *Dawk* means a stage, and to lay a dawk means to arrange for a relay of ponies from one place to another. A *tonga* is a two-wheeled cart, somewhat in the style of a Battlesden cart, in which the passenger takes a back seat. A couple of wiry native ponies are harnessed to a pole in the fashion that prevails at the Cape. These rats of ponies are really wonderful, and what with hard work and hard fare are marvels of endurance. A dawk bungalow is a rest-house, the property of Government, where, when *en voyage*, the traveller may put up, paying a fixed charge of a rupee a day and making arrangements with the *khansammah* or attendant for his messing. You are provided with bare furniture and necessaries, but have to bring with you your own bedding. You see, therefore, every traveller in India provided with a huge roll of bedding, consisting of a *resai*, or wadded quilt blankets, and the usual sheets, pillows, etc., which he uses either while sleeping in the train or in the dawk bungalow. Hotels only exist in the large cities, and the further you get off the beaten track the more uncomfortable the traveller's bungalows become.

After a hot and dusty drive, the city of Satara, with its celebrated fort crowning the hill and dominating the town, appeared in the plains below, and in due course the dawk bungalow was reached. Immediately on arrival I sent for the bazaar-master, and also for the dawk-wallah, an intelligent Parsee, who gave me some of the information I required. I found that though



DESERTED BOMPAY.

there was no actual starvation in the city, yet the prices of the staple food-stuffs had risen enormously, and that the poorer classes were feeling the pinch. Jowari and bajri, the principal grains, which in normal times were sold at twenty to twenty-two seers to the rupee, were now being sold at six or seven. Fodder too was very dear, having gone up 300 per cent., and the natives were selling their cattle for what they would fetch. On the last bazaar-day, bullocks which in ordinary times were worth from fifteen to twenty rupees were sold for two or three.

I then sallied forth to call upon the Collector and the principal civilians of the station. I found however that, with the exception of the policeman (and he too was going out the following day), all the civil officers of the place were out in the district. I then went on to the mess of the native regiment, where I hoped to find my old friends of the Tenth Bombay Infantry. They too had gone to another station, and so, having left my cards on their successors the Third, I returned to mine inn. I had not arrived long before Lieut. Rosemale-Cocq, the adjutant, rode up, and very kindly offered to put me up, an invitation which I gladly accepted. A note shortly came from the district policeman, saying he would be glad if I would go out with him to his camp at Atit the following morning, and that a few miles beyond his camp there were at Kahsil large relief works which I might like to inspect. I accepted and sent for the Parsee, who managed to lay a dawk for me to Kahsil for the following morning. I then went out into the bazaar, and made arrangements with a Goanese photographer to accompany me with his camera.

After dinner my host sent for a couple of his sepoys,

and treated me to an exhibition of native wrestling, which was curious and interesting. He is writing a brochure on the subject, and is no mean exponent of the pastime himself. It seems there are two methods, the friendly and unfriendly system. In the latter the object is to disable your opponent as quickly as possible, and I was shown several tricks by means of which the arm, leg, neck, or even back of your adversary may be broken. I believe neck or back constitute what in sporting parlance is called "a knock-out." It would in all probability bring matters to a crisis, if not to a conclusion.

Daybreak the next morning found me in the hands of the policeman, and when we had driven some ten miles down the old highway leading from Poona to Bangalore, we saw below us the white tents of his camp gleaming in the sun. While we were waiting for breakfast, I took the opportunity of studying the Famine Code. This admirable work, which is the result of official compilation and actual experience gathered from previous famines, notably the Bengal and Orissa famine of 1876-7, is to the Indian official in times of scarcity what the Articles of War are to the zealous naval officer. It is practically exhaustive, and deals with almost every possible contingency that may arise. It settles the hutting, feeding, and sanitary arrangements of a Relief Camp or Works; and takes under its protection the starving multitudes who have applied to Government for its paternal help and guidance. One great feature of the regulations is that the wages of the relief workers are controlled by the current price of food-stuff in each particular locality; but the wages have to be calculated upon a fixed standard as regards rations. In other words, each recipient of relief, accord-

ing to his or her class, has to receive a sufficient daily wage to buy the following food-stuffs.

STANDARD RATIONS.

EXTRACTS FROM BOMBAY FAMINE RELIEF CODE.

	Adults (Males). Weight.		Adults (Females). Weight.		Children. Working. (7—12 years.) Weight.		Children. Non-working. (Under 7.) Weight. Oz.
	Min. Oz.	Max. Oz.	Min. Oz.	Max. Oz.	Min. Oz.	Max. Oz.	
Flour	16	24	14	20	12	18	6
Dal	2	4	2	4	2	3	1
Salt	$\frac{1}{8}$	$\frac{1}{2}$	$\frac{1}{8}$	$\frac{1}{2}$	$\frac{1}{8}$	$\frac{3}{8}$	$\frac{1}{8}$
Ghee	$\frac{1}{8}$	1	$\frac{1}{8}$	1	$\frac{1}{8}$	$\frac{3}{4}$	$\frac{1}{4}$
Condiments and Vegetables	$\frac{1}{2}$	1	$\frac{1}{2}$	1	$\frac{1}{2}$	$\frac{3}{4}$	$\frac{1}{4}$

Flour generally consists of ground bajri and jowari, two kinds of millet, in the North-West Provinces; the mixture made from the two meals is called atta. Dal is a sort of pea (chick-pea) which is rich and nutritious. Ghee is clarified butter. Condiments consists of chilies, curry-stuff, *i. e.* cummin and coriander seed, garlic, tamarind, saffron, etc.

From this it may be gathered that a male cannot get less than 18 ozs. of food-stuff per day, in addition to a reasonable and sufficient quantity of seasoning, and the same holds good with the female adults. Working children, even if they do not perform their task, get 14 ozs., while non-workers get 7 oz. daily. This is quite enough to support life if the recipient is not too run-down to start with. A man with a large family—say wife, two working sons, one daughter and two children under seven—can fill a very large cooking pot at the end of the day's work from the collective wages, calculated on this basis. I shall have occasion to refer to the

question of wages later, but I may state here that on the Kahsil works I found a village watchman, whose ordinary wages would be three to four rupees a month, with the help of his family earning the handsome income of seventeen rupees per mensem. When I had discussed fully both the Famine Code and breakfast, another pair of ponies were put to, and I drove on to Kahsil, about seven miles off, my policeman friend's camp. I arrived in due course, and made myself and my requirements known to the engineer in charge, who courteously took me round the camp and gave me much and useful information. Kahsil was the first relief camp started in the district, and had been running since the previous November. The number on the day of my visit (January 18) was just below 6000 souls; but the engineer expected a draft from another camp further south on the following day of about 2000. The camp was neatly laid out in streets. The ordinary shelters of mat huts, in the shape of the French *tentes d'abri*, were pitched in orderly lines. These huts are 10 ft. by 6, and are built to contain a father, mother, and three children or three adults. The occupants arrange their own cooking places in front of their individual tents. The whole "*charge*," as the camp and its inhabitants are technically called, were occupied in breaking metal for the roads. There was a regular gang of miners, who were occupied in blasting and getting the rough material from a quarry which had been opened on the spot. The labourers were divided into classes, and were supposed to perform the following tasks daily—

Males.		Females.	
A class	10 cubic feet.	A class	7 cubic feet.
B "	9 " "	B "	6 " "
C "	7 " "	C "	5 " "

Nursing mothers did not work, but were paid on the A class scale. Children under six months old received full children's wage.

The pay, as I said before, was regulated by the price of food-stuff, and the rates were fixed weekly by schedule. During the time of my visit a man earned two annas three pies, and a woman one anna seven pies, on the basis of twenty seers of jowari to the rupee. The people seemed and were fairly happy and contented, and I saw no real cases of actual emaciation such as it was my lot to meet with later. I only had one case of begging during the several hours that I spent in the camp, and that was in the bazaar, where an old woman asked the sahib to give her a cooking pot, as hers was broken or stolen. The bazaar was a most flourishing concern, and the *bannias* were evidently very well to do, and looked sleek and prosperous. I found from subsequent experience that you could generally tell the state of the relief works and the condition of the workers by the appearance of the bazaar. When first started, a couple, perhaps, of mere grain shops are opened; later on comes the greengrocer, with his supply of vegetables and the commoner kinds of fruit; and as things prosper the draper starts in, and the climax of prosperity is reached when the fancy goods man and jeweller with European goods begins to minister to the increasing requirements of his customers. Here in Kahsil you found bangles, lamps, ornaments, and even toys, so that the climax had been reached. In the earlier stages of this camp, public kitchens had been constructed, but as it was found that the people preferred their own *ménage*, they were turned into a poor-house. Here the halt, the lame, the blind and the aged were

housed and fed, and they seemed to be happy and recognizant of the bounteous hand of the *Sircar*. The only real difficulty in fact, in the whole camp, was the scarcity of fuel; and this was causing friction between the natives and the forest officers, but the engineer hoped that shortly a part of the forest would be thrown open; which I heard later had been done.

I must confess, from a special correspondent's point of view, I was wofully disappointed with the excellent state of Kahsil camp. I had gone to find famine, but had come back empty-handed. My British public were expecting horrors, and alas! I had no horrors to serve up. Sadly disappointed in my search for the gruesome, I retraced my steps to Satara. In making up my first wire I felt very much in the condition of the early Hebrews when they took a turn at brick-making. I prepared, however, a brief account of my day's experience, and early the next morning sallied out and sought the telegraph office. I carefully explained to the *babu* in charge what I wanted, and showed him my authority. He was somewhat startled at the length of the message, but said he would set to work at once. I went off for a stroll into the city, saying I would be back in an hour. On my return I found the *babu* hot and excited, and he told me Bombay would not receive my message. I grasped my club—without which I never think of interviewing a native telegragh operator—I forced him down beside the machine, and told him to wire Bombay that in ten minutes murder would happen at the Satara end of the wire if they did not accept my telegram. The trembling Hindoo did my bidding, and the machine clicked fiercely. The situation was becoming strained, and the horrified clerk was gazing fearsomely at the

clock, when his features broke into a smile that would have lighted up the Black Hole of Calcutta or the land of Egypt at the time of the total eclipse, and he burst out into—"It's all right, sahib; a leetel mistake I make quite right now." All's well that ends well. I went home to breakfast, my work, as far as Satara was concerned, completed.

CHAPTER IV

KHOLAPUR

WHEN a correspondent has got off his copy, his next chief anxiety is to procure additional news, and so I made my preparations for getting on to Kholapur. The mail-train did not leave till after midnight, and so I had some few hours at my disposal, which were occupied in prospecting the ancient city of Satara. The drive to the station after dinner will always remain as a pleasant memory. The moon was almost at the full, though it rose late, and the earlier portion of the route was accomplished in the dark. The Indian moon is a thing to revel in, as it far exceeds in brilliancy the paler beams of English moonlight. The clear sky above, and the soft silver light which it sheds upon our Eastern lands, transform the scenery and cast a glamour over the whole scene which would stir to enthusiasm the most unromantic soul. About half-way we began to mount the ghaut, and after an ascent of some two miles the top was reached. A glorious sight burst upon our view. The moon, which hitherto had been hidden behind the shoulder of the brown hill over which the road wound, suddenly appeared in her full splendour, and disclosed a magnificent panorama. The valley below lay bathed in the soft white light, which intensified the shadows, and

the rare fires which twinkled below our feet showed where lay scattered the villages below.

Even the driver, a stolid and silent Mahratta, whom I had previously in vain tried to beguile with conversation, seemed touched with the beauty of the scene, and burst into a low, crooning song which expressed his approbation—or perhaps the fact that the long drive, with a possible chance of *baksheesh*, was coming to an end. Anyhow he warmed up his ponies with that terrible Indian whip of his, and we dashed down the hill. Shortly after, we arrived at the station in a final gallop, and the coachman blowing his horn lustily, heralded the approach of the sahib. My boy, who had preceded me, showed up and told me he had made all the necessary *bandobust* (arrangements) for my comfort. With true Indian forethought, or with that carelessness for punctuality which characterizes the oriental, my driver had brought me to the station a full hour before the possible arrival of the mail, and the whole station was wrapped in slumber from the highest officials down to the lowest *peon*. Waiting for a train at a little way-side station at midnight was to me a novel experience, and the surroundings struck me as typical of Eastern life and method. As I said, at the time of our arrival the station was apparently fast asleep, though my boy had kicked up from somewhere a sleepy coolie to see to the luggage, etc. About half-an-hour later a friendly official up the line rang out a warning tocsin on the signal-bell, and at once the station started into life. The station-master emerged from his sanctum, having donned his robes of office, which, in the seclusion of his quarters, he had doffed. The sepoys hurriedly resumed their uniforms, which they had discarded during the

hours of ease. The *buttiwallah*, the man in charge of the lamps, which with commendable economy he had extinguished since the departure of the last "up," mounted the signal-ladder and proceeded to light up; while his comrade leisurely strolled off to do the same to the down "distant." A crowd of passengers emerged from all sorts of holes and corners, where they had been, as only a native can, whiling away the hours of waiting in sleep. They squatted in groups upon the platform, and began to discuss the ever-pleasant and all-engrossing topics of *pies* and *rotikhana* (money and food). All was life and activity, when presently the driver of the approaching train struck up a lively serenade upon his whistle, and the train eventually came to a halt.

After much jabbering and confusion on the part of the native crowd, all got on board, and after the station-master, with many salaams, has asked if his honour will allow the train to proceed, we dash off into the unknown at about fifteen miles an hour. The station and its staff retire into private clothes and life, and the whole scene lapses once more into darkness and repose.

I have previously stated above that my next *point d'appui* was the native State of Kholapur, whose Maharajah is the chief power of the Mahratta country, and rules over a territory of some 2500 square miles, though he holds his sceptre subject to the good-will of the paramount Power. About four years ago the present chief was officially installed upon the *gadi* by Lord Harris, the then Governor of Bombay, and great and prolonged were the feastings and general rejoicings which celebrated the auspicious occasion.

On my way down to the capital, which I reached about noon the following day, the hopes, or rather expecta-



A GROUP OF MAHRATTAS.

tions, of striking the famine trail vanished into thin air. I passed through a series of most fertile garden-grounds (*mhar*), and saw a contented peasantry turning up the rich black soil for the winter, ploughing with, in many cases, five yoke of huge white Surat oxen. A short talk with the Resident on my arrival confirmed my preconceived notions of the absence of scarcity in the regions I had passed through—though he owned to famine in the Jat district of his jurisdiction.

On my expressing a desire for an interview with the Maharajah, I found that a Durbar was to be held in the afternoon. I accordingly sent word to the *Kharbari* (Prime Minister), asking for permission to attend, and also whether an interview with the Maharajah could be arranged. A mounted orderly shortly after brought me an invitation, appointing an interview after the Durbar. His Highness having sent a state carriage, I made my appearance in the most ceremonial style of dress that my limited travelling kit would produce. It consisted of a serge suit and straw hat, and my get-up presented a striking contrast to the magnificent state robes of the officials. The Durbar was held in the old palace in the city, and to one who has never seen such a ceremony the whole thing is imposing. Native troops are drawn up in the courtyard, in hollow square, and behind them are massed the native population. An Indian dearly loves a *tamasha*, and any free exhibition will always produce a corresponding swarm of spectators. As the various officials drive up to the door of the Durbar hall, the troops salute at the shoulder; the "present" is reserved for the Resident as the representative of Her Majesty, and for the reigning Prince. The guests are drawn up in two lines at the entrance,

and await the royal arrival, which is greeted with the National Anthem and a royal salute. The Maharajah with the Resident passes up to the "golden chair" (or *gadi*) at the end of the room, the English guests sitting on a line of chairs on his right hand according to rank, the native officials on the left. The chief *chobdar* then recounts the titles of the Prince and declares the Durbar open. After a short and solemn pause, the attendants bring in wreaths, *attar* and *pansupari*. The Prince decorates the Resident, and in turn the attendants proceed to garland the guests. Plates of betel-nut and bouquets are handed to each, and with a solemn invocation from the *chobdar* the ceremony terminates.

The old Durbar hall at Kholapur is worth seeing, as the carving and gilding upon the walls are very fine. A gallery runs round the hall, covered with a gilt screen, from behind which the ladies of the zenana view the performance. The hall is hung with countless enormous glass chandeliers, and the thousands of waxlights shine upon the jewellery and ornaments of the Durbaries and enhance the spectacle.

When the Resident had departed in full state, the Maharajah sent an attendant to summon me, and in a small room off the audience chamber we had a long and pleasant chat. I informed him of my business, and as I had previously made his acquaintance in Bombay, we talked of men and matters, and also of the chance of famine in his dominions. He told me that there was distinct distress in the northern part of the State, but that in conjunction with his council the sum of five lacs of rupees had been set aside for relief purposes. In reply to a question, His Highness said—"Oh, yes, we always expect famine once in every three years in

certain parts of the Mahratta country, and are prepared for it."

There was scarcity in the Jat *taluka*, but the inhabitants had migrated to the Konkan, where rice was grown, and was consequently cheaper.

Their policy was to provide for famine, and taken as a whole, the native Mahratta States had sufficient funds to cope with any difficulty that might arise hereafter. In his State a sum of five lacs had been decreed.

The following sums were to be allowed by the various States which go to form the jurisdiction of Kholapur.

Jat	28,000 rupees.	Miraj junior	3400 rupees.
Ramdurg	13,000 „	Kholapur	5 lacs „
Sangli	3½ lacs „	Mudhal senior	1 lac „
Kurundwar	1000 „	Mudhol	6000 „

The chief of Jamkhandi had just died, but there was sufficient in the treasury to meet the demands of the famine.

His Highness further remarked, when I mentioned the magnificent oxen that I had seen on my way down, that the policy of his Government was to keep up the head of cattle, as the first thing a native in distress does is to dispose of his oxen. The State compels so many pairs of oxen to be kept per acre of cultivated garden-ground, and these are continually subject to State inspection.

Mr. Kirtikar, the secretary, afterwards sent me the statistics of the relief works contemplated, which consisted of building a bridge over the river, digging several tanks, and granting money to cultivators to dig wells, and later to supply oxen to those whose cattle had died.

At the conclusion of my interview, the Maharajah told

me that he had decided to throw open the State forests to the people for grazing purposes. I heard a few days afterwards at Bijapur that this had been done, and that the inhabitants of that *taluka* had taken full advantage of the Mahratta chief's forethought and generosity. The Mahrattas are the most important tribe of the Bombay Presidency, and number several millions in all. Their territory extends from the Chandod hills in the north to the Wain Ganga, east of Nagpur, and to the south to Goa. Kholapur, however, may be considered the centre of the Mahratta Konkan. They are divided into three castes—the Mahls, Khoras and Murrens. They were the soldiers of Shivaji, and under his banner conquered the Deccan. The Mahrattas of the Konkan are hardy, patient and frugal, but have proved themselves capable of wielding the sword should occasion serve. They in many ways resemble the Rajputs, but are more temperate. The Mahratta Brahmin has a capacity and intelligence for intrigue, which our rulers know too well, and the recent events at Poona have by no means tended to alleviate the anxiety regarding this turbulent and seditious race. They are, taken as a whole, an excellent class of husbandmen, and it is from the Mahratta natives of the Konkan that Bombay chiefly draws its supplies of *mallees* or native gardeners.

CHAPTER V

IN THE CANNARESE COUNTRY

THE same night saw me again in the train making for Dharwar in the Cannarese country, which place has been created of late years by the head offices of the Southern Mahratta Railway located there. The country between Miraj (which is the junction for Kholapur, and where I again joined the mail) and Belgaum is chiefly forest grazing land, and sparsely inhabited. Forest grazing land does not necessarily indicate a presence of trees, but the term is used rather in the sense in which it is applied in Scotland to the deer forests. It consists of large tracts of uncultivated and grass land, interspersed with low scrubby jungle. In and after the rains it produces rich grass, and is used in common by the different villages who have prescriptive grazing right.

On approaching Belgaum the signs of garden culture were again visible, and in the vicinity of the city, market gardens appeared cropped with most excellent cabbages and potatoes, for which this district is famed.

At Belgaum, a railway official on his tour of inspection joined the train, and as I was the only European travelling, he courteously invited me into his special saloon. We got into conversation about the country in general, and he told me several anecdotes illustrative of the country and the people.

One story which shows the blind fatalism of the oriental still remains on my memory. During the last rains a family of cultivators, living in a small reed hut by the side of the line, were one night swamped out, and their hut blown down. They took refuge on the line itself, which here runs over an embankment, the rest of the country being more or less under water. Whether they imagined that there would be no more trains that night, or whether they trusted to Kismet is hard to say, but they actually coiled themselves on the line and went to sleep. A goods train came by and they were all killed. The horrible catastrophe was only discovered on the arrival of the train at Belgaum, and a search party going down the line discovered the mutilated remains of a man, woman, and child.

Belgaum is one of the favourite stations of the Konkan, and the fort played an important *rôle* in the Mahratta wars. After leaving Belgaum about ten miles, one enters the forest district proper; this belt of forest extends for some two hundred miles southwards along the coast, and is the happy hunting-ground of the military and civilian sportsman. Tigers are fairly numerous, and sambur and other deer are found, while in the cold weather the *jhils* swarm with duck and snipe. At this season of the year, *i. e.* the cold weather, the woods are really beautiful. Feathery clumps of bamboos of a deep golden hue mingle most picturesquely with the dark green of the teak and wild mango trees, while the many coloured creepers, bougainvillea, et cetera, climb from tree to tree, and the mhowa and other flowering shrubs form grand contrasts, and lend a colour to the whole.

On my way down, I passed Hublī, a native town of importance, and a great emporium for grain and cotton,



AN INDIAN HOMESTEAD.

which are exported to Bombay. The sudden rise in the prices of food-stuffs, which was the result of a *bannia* ring, was the cause of a serious riot of the inhabitants about a month previous to my arrival at the place. The *bannias* refused to sell except at a certain price, and the inhabitants, not seeing the force of the argument that they should starve while in sight of plenty, looted the grain shops. The Deputy-Collector was in the town at the time, and in attempting to pacify the mob, narrowly escaped with his life. A company of the Southern Mahratta Railway volunteers, hastily called out, soon quelled the disturbance.

I was told on all sides that there was plenty of grain in the country, but that the *bannias* would not put it upon the market, as they were bearing for an additional rise in price. When the scarcity first began and prices rose, the *bannias* sent enormous consignments to Bombay, but a sudden fall in the market, and the congested state of the traffic, caused such a change that many wagons were stopped at Belgaum, and eventually returned to Hubli. The wealthier ryots in this district are well known to have had at that time a stock of food-grain sufficient for three years, but they were very chary of exposing it, and were sending their dependents to the nearest relief works.

On arrival at Dharwar I had my first experience of a bullock *dummie*. This is a covered two-wheeled cart, entered from behind by lifting up the back seat, and drawn by a pair of big white trotting bullocks. There are a few dog-carts and tongas in the station, but these are private property, and the only public conveyances are these *dummies*. Progression is a somewhat tedious process, and slow at the best, as it takes a good deal of

cursing, thumping, and kicking on the part of the driver to get his "beasties" to boil up a trot for a couple of hundred yards or so, after which they subside into a sedate walk, known only to the snail and the Indian *byle*. The driver then makes another effort, and they shamble on again. The offices of the South Mahratta Railway are an imposing edifice of red brick, standing on a hill about three-quarters of a mile from the station, and the whole hill-side is dotted with the picturesque bungalows of the various officials. I had an interview with Major Burn-Murdoch, the manager, and brother of the cavalry officer of Egyptian fame. We discussed the question of railway transport, and he freely admitted that the present scarcity and high prices in this district were caused by the railway, as it offers great facilities for the transport of grain. In the old days of cartage this would have been impossible. To prove that there was an enormous increase in the grain carried by this railway during the month of November 1896, compared with the corresponding month of 1895, Major Burn-Murdoch kindly gave me the following statistics, the figures of which speak for themselves.

	1895	1896
For the week ending Nov. 7	4,922 tons.	80,714 tons.
„ „ „ 14	5,706 „	90,222 „
„ „ „ 21	8,536 „	69,770 „
„ „ „ 28	6,112 „	74,731 „

These figures show that railways tend to keep up prices in one district, but on the other hand they enable food-stuffs to be shifted, which do incalculable good to the hungry recipients in another less-favoured quarter of the empire, and so things tend to equalize and adjust themselves. Whenever a famine arises in India

the cry is at once raised that State interference and control of prices is necessary and called for. It has been stated on several occasions that railways cause famine, inasmuch as they enable the dealers to profit by a rise of prices elsewhere, and denude the country. This however simply resolves itself into a question of supply and demand. It may be granted that the sudden exporting from a certain district of enormous quantities of grain may enhance for a time the prices of food in that particular place, but in due course the matter adjusts itself.

I have endeavoured to show above that the *bannias* by overloading the Bombay market overreached themselves, and were obliged to re-import the grain sent away from Hubli. The advantages of railways in affording facilities for the quick and easy transit of grain from a more favoured district to one where the gods have been less kind, more than counterbalances the former evil.

Major-General Sir W. Sleeman, in his *Rambles and Recollections of an Indian Official*, presents us with a very true picture of the state of the country in the famine of 1833. He writes of the Bundelkund district, and says that it suffers more often and more severely from the want of seasonable showers of rain than any other part of India. He is writing of the country at a period when the railway system was only in its infancy in England, and undreamed of in India. His remarks on transport I take the liberty of transcribing here.

"They have a great variety of crops, but all are exposed to the same accidents, and commonly fall at the same time. The autumn crops are sown in June and July, and ripen in October and November, and if

seasonable showers do not fall during July, August, and September (the monsoon), all fail. The spring crops are sown in October and November, and ripen in March, and if seasonable showers (the winter rains) do not happen to fall during December and January, all, save what are artificially irrigated, fail. If they fail in one district or province the inhabitants have few equivalents to offer for a supply of land produce from any other. Their roads are scarcely anywhere passable for wheeled carriages at *any season*, and nowhere for *all seasons*.

* * * * *

"The land produce is conveyed upon the backs of bullocks that move at the rate of six or eight miles a day, and add one hundred per cent. to the cost for every hundred miles they carry it in the best seasons, and more than two hundred in the worst. What in Europe is felt merely as dearth, becomes in India under these disadvantages a scarcity, and what is there a *scarcity* becomes here a *famine*. Tens of thousands die here of starvation under calamities of seasons which in Europe would involve little of suffering to any class. Here man does everything, and must have his food or starve."

These words, dealing with our Indian Empire of over sixty years ago, apply equally now-a-days to some of the remoter districts and provinces of the great Eastern peninsula. In spite of our vaunted civilization and increased facilities, in spite of the enormous changes that have taken place, in spite of the fact that the whole system of distribution has changed by the introduction of *pucca* roads, railways, telegraphs, and canals, the famine fiend still relentlessly claims at every visit thousands of victims. The reason is not far to seek, as the population of India since our occupation has doubled, having

increased from one hundred and fifty millions to three hundred millions. The price of food-grains too, even in normal years, has risen vastly, and what would have been famine rates in those days are the ordinary normal prices of to-day.

The introduction of railways has diminished the cost of transport, and whereas in Sleeman's time it only took a transit of a hundred miles to double the price, grain can now be carried over the railway system for over six thousand miles before this happens. The Southern Mahratta Railway was carrying grain at $\frac{1}{8}$-pie rate,[1] *i.e.* $3\frac{1}{2}$ pies per ton per mile, about one rupee for fifty-five miles. Thus with grain at four rupees per *maund* = 112 rupees per ton, the cost is doubled in 6000 and odd miles.

From this it will appear evident that the extension of the railway system of India will be of enormous benefit to the country, and that Lord Harris, in his lecture on the Famine, struck the right note, especially with reference to the Bombay Presidency, when he put the claims of railway extension if not before, at any rate on a par with that of artificial irrigation.

It has, I think, been pointed out that in the famines of former years the utter impossibility of getting grain to the affected districts was the chief obstacle that accounted for the enormous death-bill which times of scarcity produced. The British *raj* is changing the aspect of affairs, and as the railway system year by year spreads its network over our vast Indian Empire, so in an increasing ratio will the mortality decrease, and the chances of acute famine be minimized, if not totally abolished.

[1] The rate is reckoned per *maund*, i. e. 80 lbs. There are twelve pies to the anna, and sixteen annas to the rupee.

There has been much talk about State interference in the question of the sale of grain. This topic I have mooted on all possible occasions, and to all sorts and conditions of men likely to be conversant with the matter. From all that I can gather, the general consensus of opinion amongst the *cognoscenti* is, that State interference with the mutual laws of supply and demand, which have been in vogue in India for countless ages, would be a most disastrous measure. The native is nothing if not intensely conservative, and though he does not actively resent the arbitrary measures of the *Sircar*, yet by his masterly inactivity and generic passivity he would defeat the ends of Government, and still continue to deal, as of aforetime, with the local *bannia*, in whose clutches he has been since he assumed the *toga virilis*, or took over the ancestral homestead. Many of our legislators declare that State regulation of the sale of food-stuffs is the panacea for all the ills to which the Indian ryot is heir. Let them, however, rest assured that such a policy would do more to alienate the loyalty of the cultivator in the future than even the misguided measure of interference with the disposition of the land has done in the past.

This chapter is more or less of a railway chapter, and so I will conclude it with a railway story which I heard at Dharwar. A few days before my arrival the head-office got a wire from a small country station up the line, from the booking-clerk, saying—"The station-master under arrest; locked in booking-office; wire instructions." A native inspector was accordingly sent off to look into the matter and report, which he did as follows—

"HONOURED SIR,

"In accordance with your Honour's instructions as contained in B. No. 654,321 of 97, I proceeded to —— and on arrival found, as had been previously notified to the head-office, that the station-master was under arrest. I accordingly instituted an inquiry, and after much cross-examination of the parties concerned, elicited the following facts, which I hereby proceed to lay before your Honour for your due consideration. It seems that yesterday, upon the arrival of the train No. 29, up mixed, the station-master duly appeared from his quarters on the platform to see to the arrival and due departure of the said train. He found on the platform a man sitting upon a box. Thinking that he was a mere passenger and likely to impede the traffic, he knocked the man off the box. Whereupon the man picked himself up, unlocked his box, took therefrom a complete suit of police uniform, which he put on, and at once arrested the station-master for impeding the police in the execution of their duty. So the case stands at present. Will your Honour, on receipt of this, wire definite instructions as to the proper mode of procedure.

"I have the honour to be,

"Your Honour's most obedient servant,

"etc."

This is so exactly typical of the conduct of a native Jack-in-office, which our system of elevating the native has produced, that it is worthy of record. So much talk is taking place, and has always been put forward about the *zoolum* (oppression) of the European towards the native, that it is at times advisable to present the obverse side of the picture. The natives

in authority are ten times more tyrannical towards their inferiors than ever a European official would dare to be, and are much greater sticklers for the due observance of proper manners and etiquette than their conquerors. Look for instance at the minutiæ of etiquette that a native prince requires to be daily shown to him, the neglect of which he would consider a deliberate insult to his standing and position, conceiving that his *abru* had not been sufficiently cared for. It is the neglect, though perhaps unintentional, of these trifling details which causes more heartburnings amongst the princes or rajahs of the land, than the steel glaive concealed in the velvet glove.

I said above that this district is the happy hunting-ground for our exiled fellow-countrymen. The *feræ naturæ*, however, may sometimes be a bit too close to be pleasant. The very evening I was at Dharwar, the wife of the *padre*, while riding home from the club in the middle of the station, as she was passing through a bit of jungle to her bungalow, had her favourite dog lifted by a panther. Burning to revenge the loss of her pet, she the next morning instituted a *shikar*, and had the jungle beaten, but the panther broke back. I heard a few days after that at a subsequent attempt this intrepid sportswoman had her revenge, and that the animal fell a captive to her bow and spear, or rather Winchester repeater. It is such stories as these which throw a side-light upon the lives which our English women live in India, and make us proud of the title of Englishman.

CHAPTER VI

BY THE WAY

I WAS now fairly started on the famine track and was within measurable distance of the scene, as I had got definite information that great distress was prevalent at Bijapur.

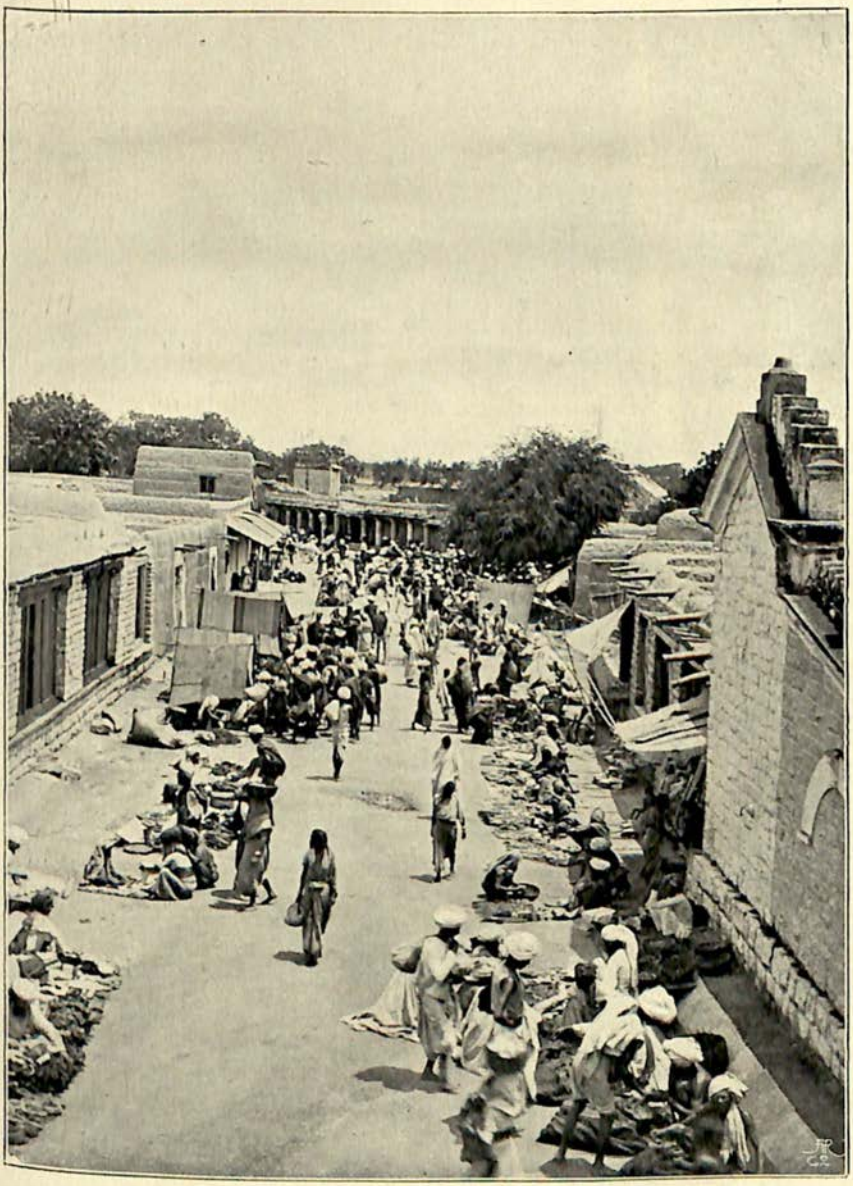
By the light of acquired experience it would have been better to have gone straight to Bijapur at the start, but still the time was not actually wasted, as I had on my way been acquiring a mass of information and statistics which proved valuable to me hereafter, and which would enable me to grapple with the matter when I should come face to face with actual want and destitution.

For a time the train took me through the fertile, irrigated land of the Dharwar Collectorate, where the inhabitants were all out in the fields busily gathering in the cotton, of which they anticipated a bumper crop. Dharwar and Hubli are celebrated cotton-fields, and these sorts have the distinction of a separate quotation on the Cotton Green of Bombay. They are chiefly used for mixing with the longer staple cotton of Central India and Guzerat. The scene however soon changed, and as I approached the confines of the Bijapur circle the aspect of affairs took a turn for the worse. For miles the train took me through tracts of country where,

as far as the eye could reach, the land lay bare and cropless. Even the trees, which before had been of frequent occurrence on the landscape, dwindled down to mere scanty and isolated specimens of the Acacia Arabica, which seemed to be the only species of vegetation capable of existing on this bare and waterless expanse.

Bijapur is a district which is absolutely dependent upon its rainfall for its crops, as the nature of the soil is unsuitable for irrigation. Even if it were not so, the supply for the country would not be sufficient, as there is only one small river, relying upon the monsoon for its supply, in the whole district. The normal rainfall of the collectorate, even during the best years, rarely exceeds fifteen inches. The amount vouchsafed this country during the last monsoon was only five inches in the year, hence the failure of the *kharif* crops.

Water plays such an important part in the cultivation of India, that one does not wonder that the inhabitants of Hindustan have deified the great life-giving streams and rivers of their land. In Bijapur the soil of the greater part of the land under cultivation is composed of what is technically called black-cotton soil. This is of a very porous nature, and does not retain moisture for so long as the argillaceous deposits of Upper India and the North-West Provinces. Hence the digging of wells, except in a few favoured parts, is a vain and useless task. For the same reason no great scheme of irrigation can be adopted with any prospect of ultimate success; and so the ryots have to rely upon what heaven sends them for their existence. A good monsoon means a year of plenty, a weak one a year of starvation, more or less acute according to the average



BIJAPUR BAZAAR.

annual rainfall. The Government of India have prepared a chart which shows at a glance the various districts liable to famine. Bijapur is marked as the blackest spot in the Bombay Presidency, and one always more or less liable to famine.

I have already on several occasions mentioned the monsoon, and the bearing it has upon the agricultural districts of India. It may be as well to briefly explain the result and reasons of the rainy season to which our Eastern dependency owes so much. More than two-fifths of the cultivated and cultivable area of India depends upon the amount of rain which does, or should fall, during the months from June to October. It replenishes the tanks, raises the water-level over the country, and enables irrigation to be practised; for without copious and constant water supply, no grain crop can be either raised or brought to maturity in the sun-dried plains of Hindustan. A weak monsoon means the throwing out of cultivation of thousands and thousands of acres of land, and a consequent and corresponding decrease in the production of food-stuffs all over the affected parts. Seeing that India is one of the most densely populated countries of the world, and that during the last century its population has doubled, this must mean the practical extinction of the surplus, unless very strenuous precautions on the part of the authorities are undertaken.

The crop system of India will bear too a few words of explanation. I said some time back (*vide* p. 34, *supra*) that there were two sowings and two harvestings in most districts of India, except where rice is grown, as in Bengal, and the eastern portions of Central India, where only one crop is raised in the year. The autumn crops,

which are called *kharif* crops, are sown in June and July, and ripen and are gathered in October and November, and these are dependent upon the monsoon rains for their success or failure. The spring crops, which are called *rabi* crops, are sown in October and November, and garnered in March, and are dependent, especially in Central India and the north-west, upon seasonable winter rains. The *kharif* or autumn crops are the ones that supply the chief and staple food-stuffs of the year. They consist of jowari and bajri (Indian millets), gram (chick-pea), wheat, barley, and other cereals. It is upon the success of these crops that the vegetarian millions of India count for their daily bread and consequent existence for the coming year. The cultivator after the *kharif* harvest pays his labourers and dependents in kind, so that a deficient *kharif* means starvation to those who live by the land. In the case of the rice-growing districts the case is worse, as, raising only one crop in the year, they have no alternative, and the contraction or extinction of the crop means scarcity or privation for the whole population till the next monsoon. From this it will be seen that the failure of the *kharif* is the most disastrous thing that can happen to agricultural India. The *rabi* crops, though important, are not of such vital interest to the general public. They consist generally of the finer kinds of cereals, sugar-cane, oil-seeds, such as linseed, gingelly, etc., and are for sale and export, not for home consumption. With the proceeds of these crops the ryot pays his rent, some of the interest due to the *bannia*, in whose clutches he is, and also furnishes himself with seed grain for the autumn, but it is not of such vital importance as the autumn crop. Though the failure of the *rabi* is

disastrous, inasmuch as it tends to plunge the already overburdened peasant-proprietor deeper in the hands of the village money-lender, and diminishes his resources, yet its effect is not so far-reaching as the extinction of the food-producing autumn sown *kharif*. To the failure of this crop, from deficient rainfall, may be attributed the very severe crisis through which long-suffering India has lately passed. From what I have said I hope it will appear evident, that the material prosperity of the agricultural portion of India is almost entirely dependent upon meteorological conditions, which are beyond the ken and power of man to remedy. Much may be done, and has already been done, to be prepared for the emergency when it arises, and all a paternal government can do is to be ready to meet and grapple with the enemy Famine when he begins to stalk through the land.

The natives of Bundelkund fully recognize their powerlessness to cope with these meteorological conditions, and have a couplet which is attributed to Sadhu, one of the demi-gods of the Mahabarata, which says—

> "If it does not thunder on such a night,
> You, father, must go to Malwa, I to Guzerat."

Meaning that if the monsoon does not fall, they must emigrate to these regions, where such conditions are unknown.

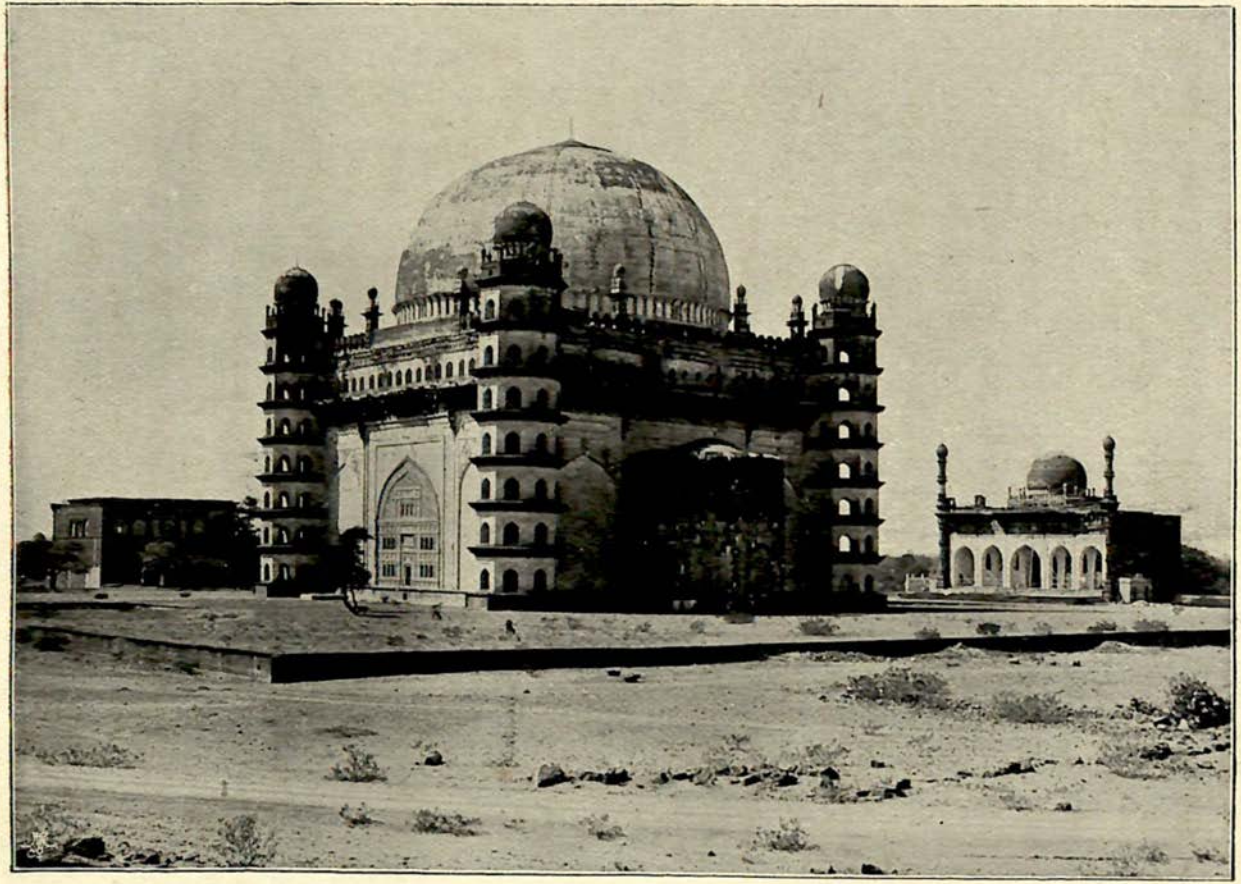
CHAPTER VII

BIJAPUR

BIJAPUR may be called the City of Tombs, as it is simply a collection of the mosques, mausoleums and monuments of a departed Moslem dynasty. It was built by Ibrahim Adil-shah in the year A.D. 1604, and was originally the capital of the Deccan. What is now called the city was formerly only the fort, the city in the days of its splendour having a circumference of thirty miles, enclosed with walls which have now more or less completely disappeared. In the suburbs of the present city are dotted about numerous ruins, which testify to the vastness of the place and its decayed glories.

Bijapur is out of the beaten track of the ordinary tourist, and yet its ruins and buildings are well worth a visit by the antiquarian and archæologist. So much is it a city of the dead, that even the dawk bungalow is an ancient mausoleum, and the utilitarian European has converted the tomb of Khawas Khan into a rest-house for the convenience of the passing traveller. It is somewhat eerie at night as one's footsteps go echoing through the vaulted dome, and one expects to see sheeted ghosts of long-departed Moslems flitting about in the glamour of the moonlight.

Exactly facing the dawk bungalow, and in the same walled and paved courtyard, stands the Gul Gumbaz or



THE GOL GUMBAZ, BIJAPUR.

Round Dome, the mausoleum of Muhammed Adid Shah, seventh king of Bijapur. It is built on a platform 600 feet square, and has the honour of being the second largest dome in the world. It is 127 feet in diameter, while that of St. Peter's at Rome is 139 feet, and St. Paul's Cathedral only 108 feet.

The city of Bijapur, like all ruined cities, is more or less unhealthy during the rains. In the famine of '76-77 Bijapur was severely afflicted, more than 50,000 people dying in the city and surrounding country.

My own personal experience of living amongst the tombs was limited, as shortly after my arrival I received a courteous note from the Deputy-Collector, offering me hospitality. My excellent "boy" shortly after transferred my belongings from the cenotaph of the Sultan Muhammed to the Anand Mahal or Palace of Joy—where of old time the ladies of the seraglio lived, but which is now the home of the majesty of the law and the British *raj*, as represented by the Deputy-Collector. At tiffen we had a long talk about the famine. I had noticed on my way up to the city the clean-picked carcases of many oxen strewing the fields, and the Deputy told me that the mortality amongst the horned cattle had been enormous. Curiously enough, the goats seemed to be doing well, but the remnant of the bullocks and milch cattle had been drafted off to the forests of Kholapur, which had been thrown open to the public by the generosity of the Maharajah. It was only the better class of ryots who had been able to save their stock, but that of the smaller fry had entirely succumbed. They had been kept alive by being fed on prickly-pear and the strippings of date-palm leaves. In the country the poorer people had for a time kept their cattle existing

by digging up the roots of *harriali* grass, but even this supply had at last failed, and in the neighbourhood of Bijapur was completely exhausted. The Government when I was there was just beginning to import fodder from Belgaum and the Cannarese district, but it was locking the byre after the *byle* was dead. If this matter had been taken in hand in the previous months of September and October, and supplies of fodder sold at cheap rates, much mortality might have been avoided; but the machinery of government is ponderous, and the wheels move exceeding slow. Hay at the time I am speaking of cost some 200 miles up the line between five and six rupees per ton, and the cutting, carriage and expenses, commission etc., would have cost about eleven rupees. The price at Bijapur was about thirty-four, so that it would not have been an unprofitable undertaking. Government will have to find the money to supply the ryots with plough-bullocks, and the final cost will be far greater than if precautionary measures had been earlier adopted.

The day of my arrival was bazaar-day, which is equivalent to market-day in an English country town. All the inhabitants of the neighbourhood and the surrounding country trudge into the city to sell any produce they may have for sale, and to renew their supplies for the week. I had a walk through the bazaar, and communed much with the natives, speaking about the prices of the various goods and merchandise exposed for sale, and, like Socrates of old, bothering the people with many questions. I found that the previous week there had been 700 head of cattle in the bazaar, and that just over 200 had been sold; that this week 375 had been disposed of, out of nearly 500, for any price they

would fetch. The best jowari, the staple grain, was selling at 21 lbs. to the rupee, and the worst at 28 lbs. The bazaar-master told me that the stocks of grain in the villages were much larger now than in the year preceding the '76-77 famine, as they had had fair crops for the last three years. He did not anticipate any great mortality amongst the people, but that the distress would be very acute. Out of a population of 800,000 in the collectorate, at the time of my visit, over 50,000 were already on the works or in receipt of relief under the village system. This number would without doubt increase as time went on. I must say in all fairness to the Bombay Administration, that they had saved the people from death by starvation, and their promptitude in opening relief works at once all over the Presidency, where thought needful, is deserving of all praise. If famine is anticipated, the sooner relief is given the better, and the village relief system is by far the best. With promptitude and strenuous efforts at the first, the death-bill can be kept down, though of course it is impossible to avoid in certain cases death from starvation. The great thing to avoid and check is the natural impulse of the native to aimlessly wander off in search of food and employment. An ably administered village relief system, if it does not stop, will at any rate diminish this. I regret to say that in the Bijapur district many grain dacoities had already taken place, and over 120 prisoners were in gaol awaiting trial for this offence against law and order. A visit I paid to the poor-house was a somewhat fruitless one, as being bazaar-day the inmates were nearly all out in the city supplementing their municipal dole with eleemosynary charity picked up in the native quarters of the town.

I found, however, three old creatures out of a total of between fifty and sixty, who were unable to go out, and so could not participate in the mendicant crusade of their fellow-inmates.

The city of Bijapur is naturally a poor one, and there is no wealthy class to support public institutions. The total annual fund of the municipality is only 20,000 rupees, and upon this small sum there are numerous claims. In the poor-house I questioned one poor old man, a sad wreck of humanity, very old and feeble, and found that he had come originally from Amroati in Central India, some 300 miles distant. There was no chance of his ever seeing again his native place, and he had come to the poor-house to die. Here is an instance of aimless migration; if his case had been taken up in his own village originally, his bones might have been laid to rest in the home of his ancestors; as it is, he will ere this have passed the bourne alone and unmourned.

The physical condition of the people of Bijapur was distinctly below par. I noticed an almost entire absence of bangles, or ornaments of any intrinsic value, amongst the female portion of the community. These treasured possessions, at once a sign of the wealth, well-being, and social status of a native, had already passed into the rapacious hand of the ubiquitous *marwarri*. The native women of India, true to their sex, will endure much ere they part with their beloved gauds and gewgaws. The absence of jewellery amongst the crowd of women gathered together in the bazaar was a very sure index that the pinch of poverty had been already acutely felt.

The next morning the Collector and I made a *bandobust* to visit the relief camp at Torvi, some eight miles

without the city wall. Starting in the grey dawn, we drove along the road, where at frequent intervals we found gangs of workers breaking stones. The nearer we approached the camp the more numerous became the crowd of workers. There were between 5000 and 6000 workers on Camp Number One, as it was called, exclusive of some 500 non-working children and a full complement of nursing mothers. We visited a group of children who were quartered for the day in a deserted mosque. They belonged to the various work-parties occupying a certain section of the road, and were put in charge of a couple of women and an old pensioner. Their parents claim them at night after work is over, and they all return to the camp. They looked poor and emaciated, and evidenced by their appearance that they had endured hard times and much privation. With the exception of the weaklings, however, they appeared to be fairly happy, and with the careless abandonment of childhood were playing games, while the old vaulted dome rang with their shrill childish laughter. A little band of girls were indulging in the game of hop-scotch, to which the tesselated pavement of the mosque readily lent itself. The Bumble in charge evidently had his hands full, and his task of controlling some fifty or sixty bairnies was no sinecure. The two old women who represented the maternal side of the *crèche* were squatting on their kibes in the shade, and, as we came upon them, indulging in a pleasant pull at a hubble-bubble. On our arrival, however, they started up, and displayed great alacrity in marshalling the children for our inspection.

Leaving the infants we pushed on again. At one place a group of women, recognizing the *Sircar* as we

came up, prostrated themselves in a body in the dust, and implored the sahibs to intercede with the gang *mohurrir* (head-man of the working party) on their behalf. They all belonged to one village, and were very anxious to work in one gang where they were, and not to be drafted off further along the road. A native woman of the coolie class does not enhance her beauty, which is not as a rule striking, when she arises from an obeisance with a patch of white sand on her forehead, and a distinct and palpable smudge of mother earth upon her somewhat snub and *retroussé* nose. It seemed quite possible to accede to the request of the fair suppliants, and the Deputy gave orders that they should be immediately formed into a separate gang. We saw their names duly inscribed upon the muster-roll, and a gang-mate appointed before we drove off. We were accompanied by the more active and younger members of the gang, singing pæans of praise of the Lat Sahibs' (Lord Sahibs) clemency, and seeing if it were not possible to extract in addition a little *baksheesh* as a fitting termination to the episode.

In due course we arrived at the camp, which was neatly planned out on a piece of high ground, with good water available close at hand. The camp was of the usual plan, as specified by the Famine Code, the shelters being mat-huts of the ordinary French *tente d'abri* pattern. It was laid out in streets, and the people classified either according to caste or villages. The workers being all out on the roads the place was practically deserted, except for a few sick persons, who were in charge of a hospital assistant, or, to give him his Indian title, *kala* doctor (black doctor). We made our way to the hospital, where this oriental Æsculapius was

busy attending to his charges. We went into the different wards, and found some patients, but singularly few considering the numbers in the camp, which as I said before amounted to between four and five thousand. One poor lad suffering from phthisis was a sad sight, a mere skeleton, and his parents who were with him were striking evidences of the dread scourge of famine. We questioned the father, who lay huddled up in a blanket too weak to rise, and he told us that he had come from about forty miles north of Bijapur. In more prosperous days he had owned two pairs of bullocks and several *bhigas* of land, but bad seasons had caused his estate to disappear, and finally he had left his bare homestead, and wandered off with his wife and two children, seeking means of subsistence. One child had died on the road, and he had brought up at Torvi Relief Camp with his remaining son in a moribund condition. It was a piteous spectacle, and my heart bled for the poor sufferers, all of whom were evidently past recall; it could only be a question of days at the most. The Deputy ordered the *kala* doctor to give them all medical comforts, and to make their remaining days as comfortable as possible.

We then passed out into the bright sunlight, where we found a poor old man lying on a *charpoy*. He was sightless from ophthalmia, and altogether a pitiable object. We inquired what was his case. This gave our worthy Æsculapius a chance of airing his English, and his diagnosis of the case was to say the least of it remarkable, if not unique. "Oh, sahib, a few days ago, sahib, old man walking in camp met with slight accident and fell down—then, sahib, felt slight scratching sensation on knee, now water on knee coming, but I

cure him soon, sahib." From the hospital we went to the camp itself, where with a certain amount of proper pride the hospital assistant said he had a couple of maternity cases, and would we like to see the "babalogue." We expressed our wish to see the ladies, who even in such troublous times had not neglected their duty to humanity. In the first tent we found a fond Mussulman mother, whose baby had seen the light on the last day of the old year. The arrival of this mite of humanity in no small degree exercised the authorities, as the Famine Code had made no special proviso for such a contingency. This young Mussulman, should he survive the extraordinary manner of his arrival in this vale of tears, may boast in after years that he was the subject of a special Government Regulation dealing with his due sustenance and infirmity. Such is the spirit of emulation, that in a contiguous hut we found a Lemani[1] (gypsy) woman who had about three days previously added to the census roll of the suffering millions of the Dark Continent. Poor soul, in spite of the valueless gaudy brass bangles and armlets which covered her arms from wrist to elbow, and her limbs from ankle to half-way up the knee, she was, and looked, a mere animated bundle of rags. Her attendant, an old beldame of the same caste, was perhaps the most hideous old woman it has ever been my lot to see—she was a relation to the patient, but I could not make out exactly what the degree of kindred was. She was toothless, and spoke the vilest *patois*, which even the doctor did not seem to understand. With great pride this old harridan brought out the wee mite for our

[1] Is there any connection between Lemani, as they are called in India, and Romany, as the gypsies style themselves in England?



THE LEMANI DANCING GIRL.

inspection. It was the smallest baby I think I have ever seen, and looked as if it could comfortably lie upon one's hand. I did not, however, venture to handle the atom. The Sarah Gamp laid it down on a scrap of rag at the tent-door, and there it lay in the sun, looking up with its immense black eyes, which seemed to be the only feature in its face, with solemn wonder at the strange beings who had invaded its dominion. The old hag then prostrated herself in the dust, and begged the sahibs to bring the baby luck with silver. We duly placed under her guidance a small silver coin at each corner of the rag. The old witch immediately darted upon the infant, and rolling baby and coins up in the rag with a shower of blessings upon our heads, disappeared within the door of the tent. The mother during the whole interview had sat huddled up in the merest relics of an old *resai*, and seemingly utterly unconscious and oblivious of the scene taking place at the tent-door; when, however, the old woman entered she turned her face, and I saw that it was one that had been once beautiful, but the ravages of time and suffering had left their indelible marks. She had the fine-cut aquiline cast of features which one meets so rarely in India, and which seem to mark a different race from the ordinary squat-nosed, flat-featured inhabitants of Southern and Central India. This woman seemed quite patrician, and of a sect and race apart.

King Sol was beginning by this time to assert his power, causing us to think of getting home, and so we prepared for the return journey. I said, however, that I should like to go and see the water supply, and we trudged off to the wells. We found here a boy cowherd watering a few poor-looking beasties, which were more

or less a mere collection of animated bones, and it was a wonder how they managed to move about at all. I of course questioned the lad, and found that they were the property of the head-man of a village which he pointed out nestling in a mango-tope about a mile away. I then inquired if many had died? The hind said his master, who was wealthy, had a few months back a herd of some sixteen or seventeen head, but the five which I saw were all that remained, the rest having perished of starvation. Wishing to confirm this, I set off for the village, and going there, the first man I spoke to turned out to be the *kotwal* (village watchman). I got into conversation, and he told me his story simply and plainly. Yes, the herd I had met was his—they were the only cattle that were left in the village; those of his weaker and poorer brethren had disappeared long ago. How was he able to preserve his? Well, he had a stack or two of jowari stalks, and that saved them. I asked what the villagers would do for plough-cattle? He replied submissively, "God knows there weren't any—the land would have to go untilled." This information so completely tallied with what I had heard previously, that it was a valuable confirmation of the state of affairs in Bijapur and district. Setting our face homeward by a different route, we found a band of Chumbars, one of the lowest agricultural castes of Central India, but the sinew and backbone of the country. They were camped by the wayside. We naturally stopped and interrogated them. Where had they come from and where were they going to? The chief of the band said that they had come from some fifty or sixty miles north of the Bijapur district, and finding that there was no work (not public relief work) in Bijapur, were travelling onwards till they

either found work or got down into the Cannara country. They appeared resigned, and I advised them to go towards Belgaum as the most likely place to effect their object.

One of the first instincts of the native aboriginal tribes of India is in times of scarcity to break up their homes, and migrate to other more bountiful districts. In the Punjaub, Malwa is looked upon as the land of Goshen, and among the people of the North-West, tradition has handed down from father to son that the Deccan is a land flowing with milk and honey. In the Bombay Presidency, Guzerat and Cannara serve this purpose.

The Wadyias, who are one of the nomadic tribes of Western India, constantly pursue these tactics, and all wander over the face of the country in pursuit of work, which they undertake under the petty contract system. I gathered a mass of details about these tribes from Mr. Morrison, Collector of Sholapur, who has the subject at his fingers' ends. The study of these under-currents of Indian native life is most interesting, and on many occasions during my wanderings I came upon the camps of these vagrants. They work in the jungle at tree-felling or charcoal-burning, and other tasks of piece-work upon which they can profitably engage. Many times in a clearing of the jungle have I found their camps, and then, when their task is done, hey presto, they up stick and away, and seek other spots where work is available. The forest officers know their worth and usefulness, and they do much excellent work in their own peculiar sphere.

At Bijapur I had struck the true famine trail, and from what I had seen and what I had heard, was fully convinced that the people of the collectorate had a long

and dreary time of privation, suffering, and starvation staring them full in the face. God grant that the coming monsoon for this portion of India may be bountiful; for another year of deficient rainfall would produce an extent of suffering and calamity which is too horrible to contemplate.[1]

[1] Since the above was written, I have heard that the monsoon was again deficient this year in Bijapur, so that the inhabitants are condemned to another year of privation.

CHAPTER VIII

SHOLAPUR

SHOLAPUR, my next resting-place, is about sixty miles by rail from Bijapur. It is the chief station of a collectorate of the same name, whose area is 4500 square miles, and with a population of some 700,000. The population of the city, according to the last census, was 62,000, but at the time of my visit there had been a considerable migration of the inhabitants into the territories of the Nyzam and also to Mysore.

The fort, which is built on level ground, about a mile and a half from the dawk bungalow, was taken after a short siege in 1818 by General Munro.

The ramparts are of mud with a *fausse-braie*, and would, like the generality of Indian fortifications, be absolutely useless to resist the attack of modern artillery. One of its gates is called the Khanta Dharwazah or Spike Gate, from having long iron spikes fixed to the huge wooden doors. These were useful in the days of old in keeping off siege-elephants, which were trained to batter down the gates with their foreheads. Sholapur is in ordinary times a thriving place, and there are one or more cotton mills there. The largest belongs to a rich Bombay merchant named Gokuldass, whose name will be handed down to posterity as the chief donor and founder of the hospital in Bombay which bears his

name. Sholapur is one of the chief centres of the native weaving industry of the Deccan. I shall have occasion to touch upon the weaving question, and the distress the high prices have caused amongst the weavers of Sholapur.

I arrived at Sholapur in the afternoon, and at once drove to the bungalow of the District Sessions Judge, who had very kindly offered to put me up for the night. The Resident of Kholapur (Major Wray) had kindly given me a letter of introduction to the Collector, Mr. Morrison, and armed with this I called upon the representative of the British *raj* at his bungalow. The Collector asked me to dinner, and I drove on to the Club, where I hoped to meet the European residents of the station and pick up some *khubbar* about the condition of affairs in the collectorate. Mr. Duxberry, Messrs. Ralli's agent, told me that as far as he knew there were sufficient supplies of grain in the country, but that the *bannias* were holding stocks with a view to higher prices later. He thought, however, that in all probability the native merchants would, as often happens, hold too long, and that they would be bitten in the end. The entire cessation of the export trade in Bombay, owing to the plague and the quarantine imposed on home-bound vessels at European ports, had had a very marked influence upon the up-country export trade of India. I was very fortunate before starting from Bombay in getting from my friend Mr. Giro, the manager of Ralli Brothers in Bombay, a circular letter to all their up-country agents. I found this of the utmost service on different occasions during my tour, and take this opportunity of thanking those who so frequently and efficiently rendered me good service.

The name of Ralli Brothers in the remote up-country districts of India is a name to conjure with, and the ramifications of that wide-world-known firm are very extensive. I often found when going into a remote village that there was an agent established there, and on making myself known to him he rendered me every possible assistance.

In the course of conversation with various members of the Club, I discovered that there was severe scarcity in many districts, and that there was acute distress in three *talukas* of the collectorate. The statistics for the week ending January 23 showed that in Sholapur there were already seventeen separate relief works established. The numbers of those capable of doing work was registered at 44,700, while of non-workers the total was 22,600. Those receiving doles under the village relief system were 3500 odd. This tots up to 70,800, so that at the time of my visit every tenth soul of the entire population of the district was in receipt in some form or other of Government relief.

If we take into account the very large numbers who had already migrated, the proportion would be much larger. This, too, was in a district which was by no means considered the worst affected in the Presidency, but it will give a good idea of what a year of famine means to the masses of India. At dinner Mr. Morrison and I discussed the famine question in all its bearings, and he also gave me a most interesting account of the various nomadic tribes of Western India, of whose vagaries, if I may use the word, he has made a special study.

Mr. Morrison declared himself in favour of irrigation works as an outlet for famine relief; and a greater part

of his district, unlike Bijapur, is suitable for this kind of cultivation. In view, however, of the great scarcity of food-stuffs, and the importance of the raising of the staple cereals, he had just previously promulgated the order that the *jaghiri* (sugar-cane) crops were not to receive any further supplies of water drawn from the State and public canals. This was a most proper measure, and though it might press somewhat hardly upon a few individuals, the greatest good to the greatest number would be attained. I remarked that as I came along I had seen several fields of jowari which in my ignorance looked fairly flourishing, though the crops were not as high or as long in the stalks as others which were under irrigation. "Ah!" said the Collector, "that is one of the sad parts of the story. All those crops you saw were the result of re-sowing, and the peasants had bought, borrowed, or otherwise procured the seed-grain for the purpose. If only a little seasonable winter rain had fallen, all these re-sown crops would have matured, but as it is they will be useless." "Well, at any rate the cultivators will be able to use the straw as fodder," I replied. "By no means," said the Collector; "the curious part of it is, that immature jowari straw is absolutely poisonous to cattle, and the whole crops will be quite valueless."

The poor suffering ryot seems to be hardly treated, and the state of the man who took the trouble to re-sow his fields is worse than that of him who let things slide, inasmuch as for a second time of asking he has expended his means in the purchase of seed-grain, the return from which will be absolutely nil. It will be the bounden duty of Government to supply these peasants with the wherewithal to stock their fields when the monsoon

comes on. This will be a very expensive business, and the money collected in England, if properly administered, should do much to obviate this difficulty. It is a question which the Government of India has to face, and considering the enormously widespread area of the famine of '97, it is by no means a light one.

A paternal government cannot allow four-fifths of the cultivable area of Hindustan to lie fallow, and the ryots have not the means or opportunity of procuring plough-bullocks to supply the place of those that have perished, or seed-grain to renew the crops that have failed.

After a most pleasant evening, spent in absorbing the very valuable details of his district which fell from my host's lips, it was decided that we should the next morning go off to visit the relief works at Ekrukh.

"*Sari char budgie hai, sahib,*"[1] were the words with which the faithful Domine greeted me the next morning, and I made out by the light of the lantern which he held that it was time for me to be up and doing. "Have you a tonga?" "Yes, sahib, waiting outside."

It was not till after eleven the previous night that I had got back to the bungalow and told my boy that I wanted a tonga ready by half-past four the next morning. There, however, sure enough, when I dressed and sallied forth, was a tonga, with a driver huddled up in his blanket in the foggy morning darkness, and two little rats of country ponies standing shivering before the door. At this hour of the morning it is quite chilly, and one is glad of a great-coat. As the day comes on, however, and the sun begins to play his part, one is like the traveller in Æsop; you discard all wraps and

1 "It is half-past four, sir."

unnecessary clothing, till by mid-day you would be glad to sit in your bones if they did not stand a fair chance of being grilled.

What a grand comfort a really good Indian servant is. Nothing seems to disturb him; he is always ready and willing, and executes orders without a murmur which your valet at home would say were impossible. My boy (Domine[1]), an excellent Portuguese, between eleven and twelve the previous night had got my order for a tonga. He had to go about a mile and a half to make arrangements with a tonga-wallah, and yet at 4.30 a.m. he was at my bedside with my *chota hazri* and the tonga waiting outside.

My fellow Anglo-Indians, we growl and groan about our servants when out there, and never have a good word for them, but it is only when we come back to England that we recognize the merits, and long for the long-suffering, ubiquitous and ever-ready bearer, boy, khansammah, or bootlair—who smooths the crumpled rose-leaf for his beloved master. We talk in theory of the neat-handed Phyllis and the trim Chloe, but give me a really good Portuguese servant or an old-fashioned native bearer. He is noiseless, punctual, attentive, and above all, if you treat him properly, looks upon his master as a god. The man who said the master was not a hero to his own valet, had not been in India; or he would never have made such a statement. The virtues of my own servant in particular, who served me during my long journey in the most indefatigable way, and lightened the toil and discomforts of the way, have led me into a discussion on the merits of Indian servants,

[1] His full name is Dominiquez de Souza Alvarez Fernandez, but the front name does for ordinary purposes.

which is however far apart from the subject in hand. In the meantime the tonga was waiting, and having clambered into the back seat, the driver woke up his slumbering ponies, and we dashed off at full gallop to the Collector's bungalow. On arrival, I found "his Honour" duly booted and spurred, and ready to start. We waited for the arrival of Mr. Carmichael, the special famine officer, and shortly after he rode up. After the necessary introductions were made, we started for Ekrukh.

Ekrukh is about three miles north of Sholapur, and is the tank from which the city draws its water supply. This tank, or rather lake, is the result of the Famine Relief Works of the years '77-78. An embankment of earth and rough stones a mile and a half long was made, which dammed up the course of the Adhin river.

The lake thus formed is ten miles in its extreme length, and four miles at its broadest part. When there is a full supply of water, the area is nearly seven square miles. The water-works were built in 1881, at a cost of two and a half lacs of rupees, and are capable of giving a daily supply of six gallons per head to the inhabitants of the city of Sholapur.

Murray in his handbook to Bombay says, that "the road to the lake is impassable in the rains—it crosses two canals, the first of which is so deep, even in dry weather, that the water flows into a back seat of a tonga."

We did cross this canal, and it may be taken as a sign of the year that the water was not much above the fetlocks of the ponies. The area too of the lake was at its upper end much diminished, and through a binocular I saw crops growing at the far end upon the bed of the

lake itself, which in ordinary years would be under water.

From the Ekrukh lake three canals irrigate the country. The high level on the left bank waters some 800 odd acres; while the low level brings under cultivation over 10,000 acres, and in its course nearly circumvents the city. The other high-level canal is a small one, and distributes its supply over only between 500 and 600 acres. The low level was the scene of the relief operations established on behalf of the indigent inhabitants of Sholapur, and notably for the benefit of the out-of-work weavers. It is close to the city, and those engaged upon the works are enabled to return to their own homes at night, thus doing away with any necessity for hutting arrangements or the establishment of a camp proper. There were at the time of my visit about 4000 engaged at these relief works. The work consisted in heightening and strengthening the banks of the canal, repairing weak places, etc. The soil was dug out of borrow-pits along the sides of the canal. It was possible, owing to these conditions, to establish a sufficiently long lead, and the carriers as well as the diggers could be ably and well employed. The labour was not severe, and yet it was sufficiently onerous to a class of people whose previous occupations had been of a much more sedentary description. Many of the workers, especially the diggers, showed me their hands, and in many cases they were very badly blistered, and showed signs of hard work. The handles of many of the *khodalies*[1] were of the roughest description, and

[1] A *khodalie* is a broad-bladed hoe with a short handle; it is the almost universal tool of India, and it is astonishing what a big task a professional digger can get through in a day with this unwieldy

these by no means tended to lighten the labour. Still I doubt if any task more suitable to the general mass of people seeking State subvention could be found. Earth-work will always provide the maximum of employment for unskilled labour. One digger, if the ground be not too hard and the lead sufficiently long, is able to keep employed some four or five carriers, and in this latter task the women and working children can be profitably employed. It enables too families to work together, and one constantly found that the father did the digging while his wives and family supplied the transport train.

In company with Messrs. Morrison and Carmichael, I made a thorough tour of inspection of the works, and followed the windings of the lower level canal for some three or four miles. There were gangs of about fifty souls stationed at intervals along the left bank of the canal. They did not seem to be wretched, and there was a complete absence of complaints. I on several occasions loitered behind the *burra sahib logue*,[1] in the hopes that when separated from the authorities I should be approached, and that the workers would air their grievances. With the exception, however, of one or two cases of the professional mendicant class, who scented a possible victim, I was entirely unmolested, and the people went on with their work with true Moslem apathy.

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implement. The natives use it for shovel, pick, hoe, and spade, and though I have often tried to get my *mallee* to use English tools, directly my back was turned he reverted to his ancient and accustomed weapon. The soil dug out is carried away in strong, round wicker baskets; these baskets when properly filled contain about one-quarter of a cubic foot of earth, and weigh from twelve to fifteen *seers*. (A seer is nearly two pounds English.)

[1] *Burra sahib logue*, high officials, e.g. collectors, commissioners, etc.; in contra-distinction to *chota sahib logue*, e.g. clerks, assistants, journalists, and others.

By far the greater part of the workers were Mahommedans, as the weaving industry is almost entirely in the hands of the followers of the Prophet.

We pursued our inquiries, stopping at nearly every gang, and questioning both the gang-mates and the individual workers.

The Collector is a past-master of colloquial Mahratta, which is the almost universal language in these parts, and seemed to be able to get at the native, which is always a fairly difficult task. An instance of the difficulty one has in getting the truth out of a native occurred when we were talking to one gang. We noticed a woman (Mahratta) who had a regular diminuendo scale of children with her. We wished to find out if her husband—as was, alas, a too common case amongst these workers of Sholapur—was sitting at home in inglorious ease, while his poor wife and children were daily out on the works toiling to fill the common pot. We therefore got hold of this lady, and began —or rather the Collector did—to question her as to the whereabouts of her husband. The following dialogue took place—

Collector. How long have you been on the works?

Mahratta Lady. About two months, your honour.

Col. Are you married?

M. L. Yes, your highness.

Col. Are these your children?

M. L. Yes, lord protector of the poor.

Col. Are you working with your husband?

M. L. No, sahib.

Col. Where is your husband, then?

M. L. He is in Sholapur, your honour.

Col. Why doesn't he come to work, then?

M. L. He is in Sholapur, sahib.

Col. Is he ill?

M. L. No, your honour.

Col. Can't he work?

M. L. No, your mightiness, he is in Sholapur.

Col. Well, where does he live?

M. L. In Sholapur, lord protector of the poor.

Col. Is he weaver?

M. L. Yes, and it pleases your honour.

Col. Is he out of work?

M. L. Alas, heaven-born one, yes.

Col. Well, come now, my good woman, what is it you say—he isn't ill, is in Sholapur, can't work—what is really the matter with him?

M. L. (with a burst of tears and beating of the breast). Alas, lord protector of the poor, *murgya* (he is dead).

Col. God bless me, why didn't you say so before? How long has he been dead?

M. L. (with another access of grief). Nearly three years, your honour.

It is one of the peculiarities of the native mind, to wish to answer every question in such a way as will exactly tally with the preconceived notions of the interrogator. One of the first things an oriental under cross-examination tries to determine is, what is your ulterior motive in asking him questions, and what kind of answer will suit you best? They are naturally very cunning of fence, and so the extraction of proper evidence is one of the most difficult tasks that the judicial department have to contend with. Added to this is the inherent want of truth—the cloud of suborned witnesses that are always available, and the readiness of an oriental to swear to anything that will lead to his material advantage!

I call to mind a reminiscence given to me by an up-country judge, which will illustrate the case in point.

A village *marwarri* (money-lender) filed a suit against an old pensioner for a certain sum of rupees lent. A cloud of witnesses were produced, who swore to the passing of the money, the due signing of the bond, even to a participation in the marriage feast for which purpose the loan had been raised. The bond was produced in court, duly signed and sealed. It was handed up to the judge for inspection—by mere accident he happened to turn it to the light, when he discovered that the water-mark upon the paper bore a date some three years later than the bond was supposed to be signed. This was sufficiently conclusive that the whole case was a fabrication, and the suit was accordingly dismissed. The judge was curious to see what kind of defence the old pensioner had, and so after the catechizing was over he sent for the defendant and questioned him.

"Did you ever have the money?" "No, sahib." "Why did the shroff bring this case against you?" "I have some land which he wants to get hold of." "Well, what defence have you?" "I have several witnesses to prove that they saw me repay the *marwarri*, and besides, I hold his receipt for the money." "Show it me." From an inner receptacle the old pensioner produced a receipt and handed it to the judge, who found that it was written on another sheet of the same date as the original bond, and in identically the same handwriting.

He found on subsequent inquiry that both documents had been written for a consideration by the village writer, and that all the parties concerned were cognizant of the facts. This will perhaps show that the path

of an up-country judge, willing to do his duty and administer justice impartially, is not altogether strewn with roses. The discovery of the fraud was pure accident, and had it not been found out an endless litigation would have followed.

A native very rarely is satisfied with any judgment given, and an appeal to a higher court ensues with the certainty of light following upon darkness. After this long digression, which I have entered upon to maintain my original proposition that the ways of the native are at times inscrutable, let us return to our workers upon the banks of the Ekrukh canal.

I was struck with the immense number of non-working children and babies upon the works. I found that here too the rule was applied that nursing mothers should receive the full wage and devote their energies to their nurslings, and quite understood what the Collector suggested, that infants in arms were, in the neighbourhood of Sholapur, at a distinct premium.

In the immediate vicinity of the canal, and subject to its influence, we passed through some splendid fields of jowari, which the owners were guarding most jealously from the depredations of birds and other featherless bipeds. When the jowari is ripe the peasants erect in their fields small watch-towers upon elevated platforms, which enable them to guard their crops. From these coigns of advantage they discharge from slings stones at the flocks of small birds who are constantly settling upon the rich, ripe, yellow-coloured grain. In some parts they have scares which stretch across the fields. These scares are made of string, with feathers and pieces of rags at frequent intervals, and are very similar, but on a much larger scale, to the methods pursued in

England to protect the newly-sown peas from the depredations of the rapacious and ubiquitous sparrow.

These cords, however, all converge upon the central watch-tower, and are violently agitated at frequent intervals by the watchman. In other places I have seen scare-crows erected in the fields. A common method is to colour a native *chatti* white, and place it on a pole amongst the corn. This appears to the marauders to be the likeness and verisimilitude of a native in his white puggaree traversing the field, and no doubt acts as a deterrent. The string and feather plan, however, is the one most universally adopted, and the most efficacious. The possession of a crop during the last season meant wealth and happiness, and would be a veritable Golconda to the happy owner. Hence the extra precautions in keeping what the blessed ryot owned. *Fortunati nimium*, etc.

We heard of several complaints of looting the crops, but when a man's stomach is gnawing at him the code of morality relaxes, and the fine distinctions between *meum* and *tuum* are likely to fade. It really was a wonderful thing, and speaks volumes for the *morale* of the people in general, that the cases of rioting and dacoity throughout the length and breadth of the famine districts did not increase to any alarming extent. There were certainly several isolated cases of dacoity, but considering the enormous area over which the famine fiend was stalking, crime statistics were not abnormal. Allow the same condition of affairs to prevail in the civilized West, and the people *en masse* would become ill-doers, and require the strong arm of the military to disperse the rioters. We have already had instances of this in Lancashire, in the years of the cotton famine.

I have many times during my tour seen a solitary sepoy guarding the treasure or the bazaar—the looting of which would mean a prolonged period of repletion to the thousands of hungry Indians. The dread of the majesty of the *Sircar* is so great that a single individual can control the appetites and baser passions of an enormous multitude.

We had by this time come to the end of the working gangs, and struck across country to rejoin our tonga, which we had told to wait for us at a certain point upon the road. On our way we came upon a field which had been planted with monkey-nuts (ground-nuts is the name by which they are known in the market of Bombay). They form an important item of export, and are sent to Marseilles to form the salad oil which we fondly think is derived from the fruit of the olive.

Sweet are the uses of adulteration, and the Marseillaise suck no small advantage from the due and proper manipulation of the monkey-nut of India.

Here we found several bands of children, mostly girls, burrowing about in the fields in search of any nuts which the thrifty husbandman had neglected to garner. It seems that they take their gleanings home, which when duly pounded go to strengthen the daily meal of *atta*.[1]

The poor little pickers-up of these unconsidered trifles looked for the most part as if a really square meal had been to them a thing unknown for some time past. They were probably the dregs of the city, and hangers-on upon the fringe of civilization.

We had a long and weary trudge across the sun-baked

[1] *Atta*, a flour made of a mixture of wheat and jowari, which is used for making the universal chuppati.

fields before we found our tonga, as the driver had misunderstood our instructions and awaited us some two miles from the trysting-place we had appointed. At last we found him and his ponies asleep beneath a tree, and having roused the lot, set out upon our return drive to the city.

I will reserve, however, for another chapter my doings in the city of Sholapur, and an account of its staple industry and my inspection of the homes and factories of its weavers.



CHAPTER IX

IN SHOLAPUR CITY

My work in the district was now over, but there yet remained for inspection the city and its weavers. The Collector suggested to me that I should perhaps like to go and see the distribution of the municipal doles to the poor and needy. I gladly consented, and our coachman took us through the narrow winding streets of the native city, where in places there was only just room for the tonga to squeeze through. The quarter we drove through seemed to be to a great extent deserted, and there were not the large crowds of natives that one generally encounters in a native town. There were certainly in the big bazaar a fair sprinkling of people hanging about in a listless sort of way; but there was a total absence of that bustle and animation which characterizes an Indian crowd. We passed through the grain-bazaar, and in the shops there were ample supplies of jowari and other cereals, but there was little or no appearance of trade, and the whole place presented a very woe-begone appearance. We doubled and twisted about through a labyrinth of narrow streets, all exactly alike and as bewildering to a stranger as a maze, till in due time we drew up at a gateway which was the entrance to the *chowri* or public hall. It is here that the public business of the city is transacted, and the

courtyard of the building was the scene of the daily distribution of gratuitous food from funds furnished by the municipality and private subscriptions. A member of the Municipal Council attends daily to see the proper distribution of relief, and as far as I could gather no one is sent empty away. I was told that over 200 doles had already been given, and I found between sixty and seventy persons still patiently awaiting their turn. Spread on the ground on cloths, in the usual native way, are heaps of jowari-meal, dhal, pulse, chilies, and a large brass *lotah* of oil. A native clerk has a register in which the name, caste and sex of the recipient is inscribed, and he calls over the roll, when the person called appears, and receives his dole. Squatting down before the almoner, he produces a piece of rag into which is poured certain portions of the various flours from the different heaps; a few chilies are added and a small portion of oil. The greater part of the relieved receive their oil in the half-shell of a cocoa-nut, but those who have not a separate utensil to receive this seasoning, are obliged to be content with its being poured over their mess of pottage. One woman who was very low down in the social scale had not even a rag to receive her portion, and so took it in a corner of her single garment, a very tattered and ancient *sari*. The whole lot of paupers were very decrepid, and were the dregs of the population. There were several old and pitiful-looking creatures, to whom the burden of supporting life much longer looked almost beyond the pale of probability. There were a crowd of halt and lame, exhibiting contortions, contractions and deformities of the most awful and painful character. The victims of ophthalmia were very numerous, and it was a sad spectacle to see

them turn their sightless eyeballs in our direction as we passed through their ranks. There were, however, little touches of humanity which relieved the awful monotony and horrible sameness of distress and disease; such for instance was the case of a man who, himself suffering from a loathsome disease which almost rendered him incapable of motion, yet lending his tottering hand to a blind brother in misfortune, and thus bringing him in touch with his daily bread. It is astonishing how kind these poor dregs of humanity are to one another, and I suppose the burden of suffering produces a vein of sympathy which one does not find amongst the hale and hearty.

There is no doubt that this daily distribution of food is the means of keeping alive a number of poor and friendless people, who without this charity would of a surety die.

Outside the gates were a row of lepers, squatting along the wall in the sun, waiting for the rest to be served, when they too would receive their portion. I had seen previously many individual cases of this fell disease, and had thought that I was case-hardened, but the awful sights which were exposed to view in all their naked deformity made me turn quite faint and sick, and I was glad when the Collector proposed a move to the quarter of the weavers. The first place we visited was the municipal weaving-shed, which had been started by the authorities to give work and employment to a certain number of deserving cases, but this was totally inadequate to meet the requirements of the case. There were twenty-two looms at work, and it was hoped that sufficient funds could be available to increase this form of relief. The present scarcity and consequent high

prices were telling very hardly upon the weavers of the city and district. From the nature of the work it is only a sort of hand-to-mouth existence, and the supply is strictly regulated by the demand.

Since every tenth man, woman and child in the district was obliged to apply to Government for the wherewithal to satisfy the natural cravings of the appetite, it may be safely conjectured that there were no *pies* to spare upon their sartorial requirements. The depression was far-reaching in its effects, and one of the first had been the closing of the looms. The municipal weaving-shed was in the charge of a Parsee, from whom I gathered the following details. I may, however, say that the shape of the loom is quite different from those hand-looms one sees in Switzerland and other parts of Continental Europe; in the Indian native loom the web and woof is horizontal and not vertical, the threads are stretched upon a framework about a foot above the ground. At one end sits the weaver, at the other the tightener and closer. The chief material is the weaving of *khadi*, or rough native cloth. These pieces are forty-one feet long by three feet wide, and when made become *dhoties* and *saris* of the male and female inhabitants. All weavers are paid by the piece, and one of these sheets can be woven in three working days. A weaver will earn about seven annas for the actual weaving; for the opening, warping and winding, women are employed, and are able to earn about one anna three pies per day. The actual cost-price of a double *khadi*, when complete and dyed, is about four rupees two annas, while a plain white *khadi* costs three rupees one anna. Each loom will employ one weaver, a couple of women to warp and wind, and a boy

to feed, so that four souls have to live out of this work, and it takes three days to earn three rupees for the undyed stuff, apart from the cost of the material, which must of course be deducted from the gross earnings. It will be seen that the trade of weaving is not at the best of times a very lucrative one, and the establishment of spinning and weaving mills in Bombay and elsewhere has done much to cut the ground from under the feet of the struggling native weaver. One great reason for the shutting down of the looms since the establishment of the relief works is that the women can earn more per day on the works than at the loom. Again, only a limited number of children can earn a wage in the factories, whereas all children are put upon the pay-sheet at the works. In the case of a family they do much better from a pecuniary point of view when receiving State aid, and so naturally choose the more lucrative employment. This state of things the Government cannot help, it being its first duty to see that the people of India committed to its care should not die of inanition. In every great scheme of public charity there must always arise cases which cannot be foreseen or even legislated for. The provisions of the Famine Code are drawn upon the lowest scale compatible with the saving of human life from extinction, and yet it will always happen that in certain cases the populace will from a strict political economist's point of view get the better of the *Sircar*.

I have discussed this question with various authorities, and the conclusion I have come to is, that as the Government with each recurring famine gains experience, so surely will the system of public relief works lose ground, and the system of village relief gain the ascendency.

The arguments against the system of public works are very strong, while the village system has much in its favour. In the first place, the establishment of public works in certain set districts and places tends to the disintegration of the village system, which is the basis of agricultural India. Secondly, the congregating in a fixed place of immense masses of humanity who are already on the downward grade, and so more liable to the ravages of disease, invariably produces cholera and other virulent epidemics. These assemblies of people also increase the labours of the already over-worked and under-manned Public Works Department, and it is perfectly impossible that an absolutely perfect system of supervision can be attained. From the very circumstances of the case, and the surroundings and the paucity of Europeans capable of supervising any public works, a very great amount of the smaller details of the working must be left in the hands of native subordinates. Any one cognizant of the lower-class native official when put in a position of trust, is well aware that the natural result is *zoolum* and *zubberdustie*.[1] In numerous places in India public works of real practical utility cannot be found; except where large irrigation works can be established, the work done is very often absolutely useless, and the workers themselves are fully aware of this fact. This tends to listlessness and the performance of the least possible task for the highest possible wage. In more than one instance during my tour I found people employed upon the construction of cutcha roads, which in the next monsoon would entirely disappear, and in one case thousands were digging up and making a road

[1] Oppression and high-handedness.



SHOLAPUR WEAVERS.

through the sandy desert, which the first sandstorm would obliterate.

Now in the system of village relief, the population, instead of being drafted off to a distance, are concentrated round their hearths and homes. Works of sanitation, water supply, and general improvement can be established. The people are working on their own for their own; the supervision can be localized, and the chances of fraud minimized. The conservatism of the Indian ryot is conserved, and his Lares and Penates saved and respected. A gang of workers when engaged upon a work of practical utility of which they can reasonably expect to see the outcome, will do twice as much as the same gang employed upon what is to them an absurd and useless task. I am morally convinced from what I have seen and what I have heard, that the death-warrant of the public relief works has been practically signed, and that in the next period of scarcity the system of village relief will be universally adopted.

Let us, however, return to the weavers and weaving of Sholapur. I visited several private houses where looms were established. Many of these are farmed out by the proprietor of the house; they vary in number from three to eight, according to the space at disposal. I found, however, a very limited number at work, and on inquiry was told that many weavers had gone off to Mysore, some to Hyderabad, and that large numbers were on the works. The next place inspected was a large factory kept by a native of the Padamsah caste. It was a large building of true Indian architecture. The inner courtyard was surrounded on all sides by a three-storied building. The proprietor who showed us

over the place lamented the present crisis, and told me that though he was the owner of a hundred looms only twenty were running, and that he was having a very bad time, and losing "plenty, plenty money" in consequence. It was a well-arranged and organized establishment, and the proprietor, in spite of his losses, had not begun to waste, as he looked and was sleek and portly.

I do not know whether the present stress had caused him to ask his fate at the hands of the stars, but in the courtyard were a couple of *Joshi* (astrologers), whose long scarlet robes, fanciful puggarees and kowrie, and bead-bedecked necks and wrists, gave them a picturesque appearance. I tried to get them to exercise their arts of divination in my favour, but in spite of all my promises they firmly and courteously declined. Whether they feared the presence of the Collector sahib, or whether they considered it probable that I should be an unlikely subject, I cannot say, but no inducements on my part would make them draw back the veil and reveal my destiny in the future.

After the interview with these wise men of the East, we went across the road to inspect the cook-rooms of the establishment. These were a series of tidy and clean rooms, each caste and sect having a distinct fireplace, and the Mahommedans a separate room set apart for the preparation of their creature comforts. The whole establishment of this worthy master-weaver was well-conducted, and one felt sorry that a man of his enterprise should be feeling such hard times. He was, however, fairly wealthy, and was doing much good to his poorer brethren in distress.

The sun by this time had approached the meridian,

and I began to think that I had done enough for one morning's work, so this ended my inspection of the city and its works, and I returned to the bungalow to bath and breakfast.

When I arrived at Sholapur, I had fully hoped to meet my old friends the Weirs, whom I had known in earlier days, when Weir was judicial assistant in Kathiawar. He had since those days left the judicial side and reverted to revenue; and was at the time of speaking Assistant-Collector of Sholapur. I found to my chagrin that he was out in the district, in camp, about thirty miles from head-quarters, and that we should not meet. Mrs. Weir had been doing a most noble work in aiding the weavers; she had got orders for country cloth from regimental messes, friends and others, and though suffering from the effects of the climate, had refused to go home, and had stayed with her husband all through the trying time. Just before I left Bombay I wrote to her, asking if she would send me samples of native cloth, and saying that if possible I would help her in her noble undertaking. I got the following reply, which speaks volumes for the energy and indomitable perseverance of one of our country-women in the cause of suffering humanity.

"*Camp Mohol*, 12. iv. '97.

"DEAR MR. MEREWETHER,

"I got your letter some days ago, but have been laid up with a bad go of fever and chill, and have not been able to see after anything. I now send you patterns—not all—but a portion only. So far we have been very successful over the weaving, having kept 394 looms in work since Christmas.

"We have employed

	338	weavers
	407	women
	664	children
	274	dependents
Total ...	1683	

"In addition to this list, there are other weavers in other *talukas* of whom I don't know the particulars, and in connection with the weaving there are also some 50 souls employed and kept on dyeing the cloth; also some 50 souls employed in sewing the cloth—these should be added to the total. If we said we kept off the works over 2000 people, I don't think we should be overstating the number at all. The orders are beginning to slack off a bit.

"Yours sincerely, M. W."

This letter will, I think, be ample and sufficient testimony to what one noble-hearted English woman was able with untiring energy and zeal to accomplish.

After tiffen I had to compose my telegram to London, and recount my experiences gained in the morning. I was fully aware that there was scarcity, distress, and even famine in the districts of Nassik, Admednagar, and Khandeish, but I felt that I must not devote any more time to the Bombay Presidency but get further afield. I arranged therefore to start for Nagpur by the train leaving that evening, and expected after about twenty-six hours in the train to reach the administrative capital of Central India by the following night. "*L'homme propose*," etc., as will be seen by those who follow my experiences into the next chapter.

CHAPTER X

EN ROUTE FOR NAGPUR

SUNSET found me with my work completed as far as Sholapur was concerned, and a message was speeding over the wires which the next morning would appear in the London papers, giving my experiences of the previous day. The telegraph, as we all know, now-a-days annihilates distance; yet the fact is more forcibly borne in upon one when one considers that in a space of twelve hours the words that I had penned in the Judge's bungalow at Sholapur would be in the hands of the British public, and I was vain enough to think would form a subject of conversation at many an English breakfast-table.

I thought too that these words would be read with some interest by my aged parents in their far-off Kentish home, though I doubted whether by this time they were aware of the fact that their son was the author. My departure from Bombay had been of such an unexpected and hurried character, that they could only be informed by mail of my change of plans and the new departure.[1]

Here I was then, settled in the train which was to

[1] In my mind's eye I pictured my father opening his copy of the *Times* and commenting at the breakfast-table upon the distress in India.

take me to Bhusawal, the junction where I had hoped to make connection with the Bengal-Nagpur line, and thus get on to the chief city of the provinces of Central India. Travelling in India, to any one who is unable to sleep in the train, is an unmitigated nuisance. I am glad to say that this never troubled me, and I was able to get a night's rest as comfortably while being whirled through the darkness as other less fortunate mortals can obtain in a stationary bed in the seclusion and comfort of their own bungalows. This was for me a lucky state of affairs, as the circumstances of the case and the immense distances I had to traverse compelled me to adopt, whenever possible, a system of night travelling. Perhaps earlier training had something to do with this faculty, as in former years I had often occasion to journey by night between Bâle and Calais, and *vice versâ*. In fact, I had made this trip nearly seventy times. I say it with a certain amount of pride that I had become so accustomed to the journey that I could put myself to bed at Bâle, and wake up the next day at Calais, the intervening hours having been passed by me in sleep, Nature's sweet restorer. In due course, after having satisfied the cravings of the inner man by dining *en route* at Dhond, I turned in for the night. The next morning the faithful Domine appeared at the carriage window, and informed me that an accident had taken place up the line, and that we were detained. Hastily assuming my day dress, I stepped out on the platform and found that we were at Pachola, a little wayside station about an hour and a half from Bhusawal. I made inquiries from the officials, and discovered that up the line a wagon of a goods train which had preceded us, from some unknown cause had become

derailed, and that our further progress, till the obstacle was removed, was blocked. There were one or two other European passengers, one an officer going to rejoin his regiment at Neemuch, and we were all fearful that this delay would cause us to miss our various connections at the junction ahead. There was no refreshment-room at the station, and so I sent Domine off to forage at the dawk bungalow, to see if he could raise materials for *chota hazri*. After a somewhat prolonged absence, he returned with the *khansammah* of the rest-house, bearing a kettle of tea, in which he had already mixed the milk and sugar, and a couple of cups. Added to this were a bunch of bananas. The keeper of this hostelry drew his supplies from Bhusawal, when favoured with a visitor, which was rare, and he was not able to raise a loaf of bread. He certainly offered to procure chuppaties, but I and my fellow-travellers did not feel that at that hour of the morning we could tackle this form of refreshment, so we *chota-hazreed* off bananas and weak tea.

By a lucky accident, the permanent-way inspector was visiting this station, and on being summoned he got together a gang of coolies, and proceeded to grapple with the disaster. The station-master was arrayed in all the panoply of his official dress, consisting of a cap with the blazon of the company on its front, and his smart black coat with gold lace; while his nether man ended in the usual *dhotie* and bare, black, hairy legs, and his feet were clothed with the inevitable side-spring patent leather shoes. He was at his wits' end. Like all natives in a crisis, he was *gobra*,[1] and could only feebly mutter, "*Coming* all right presently,

[1] Silly, distracted.

huzoor; patience, sahib, all will be well." In all humility I suggested a solution of the difficulty which seemed to me feasible—that there was no down-train expected for at least a couple of hours, and so if he took all necessary and proper precautions, he might send on the train to the next station, which was about four miles distant, on the other and uninterrupted down-line. This of course would require the utmost precaution, but I did not consider the matter absolutely impracticable. Fired with this idea, and with an air of being willing to do or die, the station-master, accompanied by the driver and guard, retired into his holy of holies, the station-master's office, and proceeded to consult the Sibylline books. These, in his case, consisted of the ample code of instructions which are the *vade mecum* of the native officials. I do not know whether the supreme powers of the line had ever contemplated such a thing as a block of one line being possible, but they had not evidently ever conceived the notion of utilizing the unblocked portion for the expedition of traffic.

After a lengthened absence the *babu* returned, the traces of his wrestling with the Fates plainly traceable upon his sombre-coloured visage, and sadly informed me that he could find no regulation which would allow him to act thus on his own undivided responsibility; and that we must await the arrival of the break-down gang which he had already sent for.

For three mortal, blessed hours we waited, sweltering and grilling in the sun of that lonesome and unshaded station. In the meantime the way-warden and his gang had not relaxed their efforts, and a triumphal shout announced that they had won a well-earned victory.

The recumbent truck had been unloaded of the baulks of timber it had contained, and the vehicle itself set upon its legs, or rather wheels, again, and was being pushed into an adjacent siding. At this moment the break-down gang, with a "death or glory boys" expression upon their faces, dashed with their train into the station. The tempers of the patient travellers were by this time somewhat exhausted, but we greeted the would-be rescuers with a somewhat sarcastic cheer, and promised that their deeds of derring-do should be spread over the length and breadth of the land. I do not know whether the strain had been too severe for this devoted band of engineers, but they received our sallies in gloomy and sardonic silence. A good deal of time was even then cut to waste, while the officials held a council of war and proceeded to inspect the scene of the horrible catastrophe.

At length, with a parting blessing and an injunction to be careful, we were allowed to proceed on our way. As I had anticipated, my train for Nagpur had already gone, and I was condemned to kick my heels for over twelve weary hours in the dreary expanses of this important junction. My fellow-passengers were more lucky, caught their up-country train by the skin of their teeth, and steamed away, leaving the station to desolation and to me. My first step was to order breakfast, and to see if I could get a bath, of which I stood sadly in need. I inquired of a ticket-collector, and he said, "Oh yes, sahib, beautiful bath in the Railway Institute over the way." I sent my boy off to inspect and make the necessary preparations. He soon came back with a doleful countenance, and said, "There is a big tank, sahib cannot bathe there; no soap or any-

thing, sahib." It seems that we had lighted upon the swimming-bath provided by the thoughtful company for the delectation of its employés. I was rather in need of a tub of boiling water and a bar of brown Windsor to remove the ravages and stains of travel, and so sent Domine to make further inquiries. He at length discovered that there were proper tubs in the waiting-room, on the far side of the station, and I was soon splashing about to my heart's content. A breakfast tiffen followed, but I had still some ten more mortal hours to kill, ere I could again get under weigh. I took the opportunity of getting into conversation with the railway officials, whenever I could button-hole one, but even this resource failed me, as they disappeared one by one, and I was driven back to the poor consolation of making up my accounts and notes to while away the time. In the afternoon I strolled over to the Railway Institute Gymkhana, where the band, composed of some dozen native railway men, was enlivening the proceedings. Tennis and Badminton were in full swing, and these forms of recreation seemed to be the only means of alleviating the pressure of existence in that lonely and benighted spot. Almost the first person I came upon was a man whom I had previously known when stationed at Bombay, and with true Indian hospitality he at once asked me to take pot-luck with him at dinner. I was introduced to his wife, and having most willingly accepted their invitation, we passed a very pleasant evening together. The night mail was due at Bhusawal about half-past ten, and when I came to the station, having taken leave of my host and hostess, I found that my servant had already secured a place and made up my bed. I was condemned by the delay of the previous

morning to pass another night in the train, but accepted the situation with stoical resignation. I had a couple of fellow-passengers, one of whom I took for a canny Scot, as he was clothed in heather-coloured clothes and a very conspicuous Tam-o'-Shanter hat. He had all the appearance of a lowland laird upon his travels. When, however, he prepared to get ready for the night, I discovered by his other garments that he was a Parsee, and afterwards heard he was the owner of the Swadeshi Mill in Nagpur, one of the largest spinning and weaving enterprises of Central India. I read the name of my other stable companion on his dispatch-box, and from a certain family likeness and similarity of name, asked him, when we had thawed somewhat, if he had any relation at Poona, a doctor stationed there. He replied that the person in question was only his brother. I had been staying with the doctor during the last Poona race meeting, and so this formed a bond of union, and we chummed up. When we had exchanged experiences, my newly-found friend told me he was the Abkhari Commissioner for the Central Provinces, and that he was on a tour of inspection, and busy settling the contracts for the year for the coming *mhowa* harvest. *Mhowa* is a flowering shrub which grows in the forests, and from the flowers of which is distilled a potent spirit. The right to make and sell this spirit is farmed out to different contractors in various districts, and the State profits very largely by the revenue derived from this form of excise. The Central Provinces had in many parts of their jurisdiction decreed to throw open the forests and their products for the benefit of the distressed population ; which would cause a general *bouleversement* of existing excise arrangements, and

entail an enormous amount of extra and unexpected work upon the Excise Commissioner. Mr. Cleveland was running up to his head-office for a day, but after that we found that our routes would be identical, and that, if I cared, we could join forces and travel together. I gladly embraced this opportunity of general companionship, and over a final peg before turning in, we sealed the compact.

The longest lane has a turning, and even a night in the train must sooner or later come to an end, so the next morning, at about nine o'clock, we steamed slowly into the busy station of Nagpur.

PART II

CENTRAL INDIA

CHAPTER XI

NAGPUR

ON my arrival at the station I was met by a *chupprassie*, with a note from the manager of the Bengal Bank of Nagpur, whom I had known in former days in Bombay, offering me bed and board for the night. As I drove up to the Bank bungalow, the native guard which is always kept at up-country branches turned out and presented arms, an honour with which I was duly gratified, and which I recognized with the air of a general or governor on his tour of inspection.

My friend was awaiting me on the steps, and with him was another old Bombay friend who was visiting Nagpur in the interests of his firm at Bombay, and so I felt quite at home.

When I had tubbed and dressed, we sat down to breakfast, at which we had an excellent dish of silver fish, as they are called, which are caught in the adjacent river. I at once began to discuss the famine, and proceeded to extract all the information possible from my worthy host. I gathered that there was great scarcity in the neighbourhood, and that prices had risen to an abnormal extent. There was acute distress in the

taluka of Balaghat, and this was the blackest spot in the district. I immediately expressed a desire to visit this barren region, but on subsequent inquiry I found it was one of the most inaccessible places in the Central Provinces. It would have involved laying a dawk of some forty or fifty miles through the rudest possible jungle, and as I was travelling against time and the ever-increasing power of the sun, I had reluctantly to abandon the project.

Nagpur, as I have previously stated, is the seat of the Government of the Central Provinces and the head-quarters of the Chief-Commissioner. The total area of the province is 3843 square miles, with a population, according to the last census, of 737,862. It is divided into four sub-divisions, named Nagpur, Umrer, Ramtek, and Katol, which are looked after respectively by an Assistant-Commissioner. I may mention here that the term Commissioner is used in the Central and North-West Provinces and the Punjaub instead of the title Collector, which signifies the same office in the Bombay Presidency.

Nagpur is an important trading city, and the emporium for the cotton of the Central Provinces, the best cotton being grown at Hinghenhaut. There are several large spinning and weaving mills, which are in the hands of Hindoo and Parsee capitalists. It is also famous for its oranges, and a large export in this fruit is done. In fact, a wagon-load a day is sent during the season to Hyderabad alone, and a similar amount is sent to Bombay and Calcutta. In the station-yard, on arrival, I saw an immense heap of the golden fruit piled up, and a crowd of packers and sorters were busy putting it into crates ready for exportation.

Nagpur is 759 miles from Calcutta, 812 from Allahabad, 244 from Bhusawal, and 511 from Jubbulpur. The chief language spoken is Marathi, though many of the traders are conversant also with Guzerati.

The Central Provinces, with the Berar's, include that immense plain of Central India which extends from Jhansi in the north to Chinoor in the south, and from Bhusawal in the west to far-off Sambulpur, that charming place on the Mahanadi river, a paradise for the *shikari* and the fisherman alike. A parsimonious policy of the Government has kept this vast tract of country inadequately, if not inefficiently officered; and the bitter cry that has for years past ascended to the breezy heights of Simla from the over-worked and under-manned staff, has been "Give more help." When you come to think that one Assistant-Commissioner holds in the hollow of his hand the lives of some million of our subjects, and that the tract for which he is responsible, and over which he has almost undisputed control, is equivalent in area to the combined counties of Yorkshire and Northumberland, with the Principality of Wales thrown in as a make-weight, one can gather some faint idea of the vastness of our Eastern Empire.

The Central Province official machinery has always been run at full pressure, and when a crisis like that of this present famine arises, a break-down from over-speed and over-work is the natural result.

I had heard that there was a large poor-house in the native quarter of the town, so getting hold of a tonga of the most ramshackle description, I started upon a voyage of discovery.

We drove some three miles through the crowded native quarter, where were exposed for sale every

imaginable article, from the rudely-made articles of native manufacture to the glittering tinsel ornaments and Brummagem *bijouterie* of Birmingham. My conductor, after passing without the city-gate and wall, drew up at an ancient building, which he informed me was the *garib logue khana*, or, in other words, the hostel provided for the poor and needy.

This was an ancient *serai*, the blank wall facing the street being pierced by a massive gateway, with two very heavily-timbered gates of excellent ancient Indian workmanship. Every now and then in the native quarters of a city one comes across these specimens of native carpentry, generally overlaid with very massive cross-work beams and showing great solidity. They are the signs of bygone troublous times, when every man looked upon his neighbour with more or less suspicion. These *serais*, or rest-houses for travellers, were in fact, more or less, strongholds where the wandering merchants could seek repose, and if necessary defend themselves from the bands of wandering marauders which overran the country. We have to go back to the Middle Ages in civilized England to find a similar state of lawlessness, but in India it is only of comparatively recent years that unbridled rapine, murder, thuggee, and dacoity were rampant in these remote plains of Central India. Every man carried his life in his hand, and was always more or less prepared for the worst. The rule of the *Sircar* has changed all this, and the inhabitants of Ind travel with the utmost confidence in the strong and far-reaching arm of the law. Even in these times of famine, when one might expect that disorder would be rife in the land, I travelled through the length and breadth of the afflicted districts,

and my only weapon of offence and defence was an ordinary bamboo cane.

This ancient *serai* before which I had halted had been acquired by the municipality some time back as a poor-house.

When I entered the gates a couple of sepoys saluted, and in the gate-house I found a *karkoon*[1] and his attendants, busily attending to the clerical business of the establishment. They were preparing the muster-rolls, writing up the day-books, and in fact doing that mass of official correspondence and routine which seem inseparable from the distribution of charitable funds. Red-tapeism is perhaps more rampant in India than in any other known country of the civilized world. The mass of records, statements, reports, which are deemed necessary, and which the famine and its attendant relief-system entailed, would be sufficient to keep all the buttermen in London in sufficient paper to envelop their wares for at least a couple of centuries. If I had accepted even a fiftieth part of the literature, statistics, etc., which were offered to me during my tour through the famine districts, I believe that I could have collected sufficient material to fill another edition of the *Encyclopædia Britannica.*

The courtyard of the *serai* was surrounded by a galleried verandah, and on to this in the way usual in native buildings opened a series of rooms. The northern side of the courtyard was devoted to a small hospital, which was in charge of an hospital assistant. He had under his care only those suffering from the lighter disorders; all the more serious cases were at once transferred to the large and well-ordered native hospital

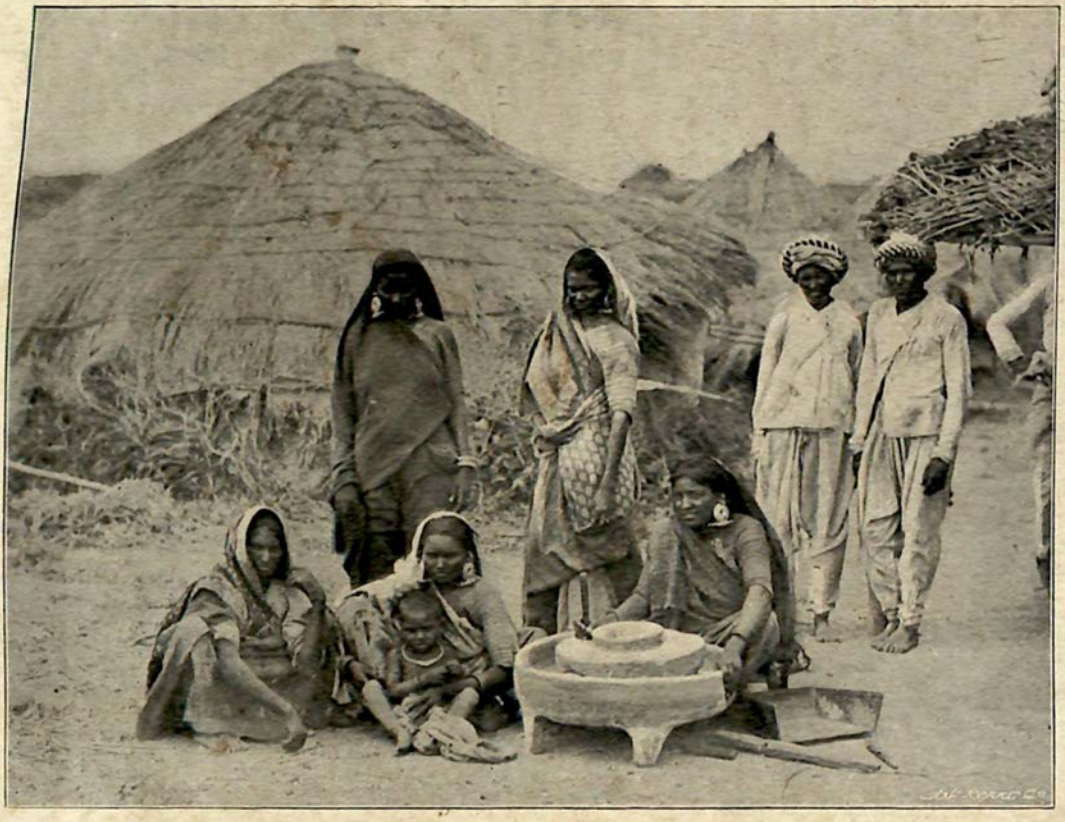
[1] Native writer or clerk.

in the city. I found about a dozen patients who were attacked with the ordinary diarrhœa, which in times of famine is a very prevalent disease, especially amongst the new-comers. Their stomachs, from long-continued abstinence, have got out of working order and cannot assimilate their food. In spite of the utmost precautions of the authorities, the hungry new-comer will stuff himself with a mass of indigestible food—chuppaties for choice—if he or she can by hook or crook lay hands upon these delectable luxuries. Repletion is the result, and bowel complaints and dysentery the consequence.

The southern side was devoted to the large kitchen and water-supply for the inmates, and for the due housing of the Brahmin cooks who catered for the large number under their charge. The total number of inmates on the day of my visit exceeded a thousand.

The food, consisting of rice, dhal, ghee, and condiments, was being cooked in huge copper *ghindies* or caldrons, and with the heat and the smoke and the naked attendant sprites, reminded one of the castle of Fee Fo Fum or some other giant's kitchen. A band of Mahratta women were busily preparing the *atta* (a mixture of jowari and bajri flour), from which the chuppaties are made. The grain is ground in native stone mills, which are worked by a couple of women, who cause the upper stone to revolve by a short handle. The picture recalled the old Scriptural scene of "two women grinding at a mill." The flour thus obtained was passed on to another set of females, who duly made it into dough and hammered it out into the required shape of the universal chuppati.

A chuppati is a flat cake about the size of a dinner-plate. It is in appearance similar to the good old



GRINDING BAJRI.

Scotch girdle-cake, or the delicacy which in one's boyhood one used to get in Leicestershire under the name of pikelets. In taste, however, it is far different, and it is of the toughest description, but I believe its properties when used in moderation, and to a stomach accustomed to this form of refection, are very life-sustaining. It is indeed in many, and in fact in most parts of India, the universal dish of the masses. These chuppaties, when duly kneaded and beaten out, were passed on to the chief Brahmin baker, who placed them upon a native oven made of stonework and heated by a wood-fire beneath. A special Brahmin was in charge of the drinking-water, and the utmost care to avoid pollution was taken. Each huge *chatti* or earthen jar, which put one in mind of Ali Baba of pantomime repute, was carefully covered over the mouth with a piece of muslin, to prevent the entrance of any flies or other life-bearing creatures. The whole place was exceedingly well-ordered, clean, and a perfect model of a native kitchen.

The inmates are fed twice a day, at nine in the morning and four in the afternoon.

The daily ration consists of—

1 lb. of rice boiled.
4½ oz. of dhal.
1 chuppati at each meal.
½ oz. oil.
½ oz. of condiments, *i. e.* chilies, salt, etc.
½ oz. of ghee or clarified butter, which are mixed up with the dhal and made into a thick soup.

The dimensions of the actual *serai* itself were of course quite inadequate to the due housing of the thousand odd inmates seeking its shelter. A large *mandap*[1] of matting and bamboo had been constructed,

[1] Shed.

to which entrance was obtained by the southern gate of the building proper. This poor-house is managed entirely by the native authorities themselves, and everything done upon the caste system. It is regulated by a joint committee of Hindoos and Mussulmans, and the religious principles and scruples of the inmates are rigorously and religiously preserved. This is as it should be, and were the same rules enforced all over India we should hear of less complaints from the natives themselves, and give a handle the less for the congress-wallah and the brigade of the discontented to turn. These men are always ready to scoff at our rule in India, and in many cases our system of administration gives them a favourable opportunity. In this *serai* all the food arrangements are in the hands of Brahmins, and thus the prejudices of even the high castes are in no way offended.

The part of the *mandap* which is not devoted to an exercise yard is roofed over and divided into wards. Each ward contains fifty inmates of the same caste, and they appoint their own head-man, who is responsible to the officials for his charges' comfort and well-being.

I then began my tour of inspection, and inquired into the status and *place d'origine* of several of the inmates. In many instances I found that the most emaciated and poverty-stricken cases came from Balaghat, thus confirming my previous information about the existence of severe famine in this district. The general condition of the people was very low, and that the greater number of them were reduced to the final stage of destitution was only too self-evident. Many of them had reached that stage of callous indifference and torpor which long-continued starvation produces. They lay or sat about

listlessly, and even the approach of a sahib, which in many instances is the precursor of a voluble string of complaints, failed to rouse them. In fairness to the administration, I must say that by far the larger proportion of these were new-comers, who had not been long enough there to recuperate their powers and strength.

I had absolutely no complaints about the food, though my attention was constantly called to the want of clothing. Many were the piteous appeals made to me, and the rags scarcely covering their bodies were frequently held up, while the wail went up—"*Sahib, sahib, copra na hai, sahib; bahut tundra hai, sahib.*"[1] I inquired into this, and the superintendent said that they would all be supplied with raiment in due course. He added that when the house was first opened every new-comer had been given clothing, but that in very many cases the recipients had sold it in the bazaar. They were now providing the people with clothing of a particular pattern, which would not be so readily disposed of, the women receiving a bright yellow *sari* and the men a warm sort of jumper made of gaol-cloth. They had found this plan answer, but it was difficult to obtain a sufficient supply of these materials owing to the sudden influx of destitute visitors. The actual persons that I saw in the enclosure were those who were incapable of work, with the exception of a few men and women who were engaged in making string. The whole place was beautifully clean, and daily smeared all over with cow-dung. This may seem repugnant to European ideas, but a native when he wishes to perpetrate a spring cleaning, instead of washing the mud floor, gives it a new coat of this mixture.

[1] "Sir, sir, I have no clothes; I am very cold, sir."

The able-bodied amongst the inmates were daily taken off under escort to the river-side, some half-mile away, where they were engaged in making a dam across the bed of the nearly dried-up stream. This was of earthwork, and was later to be faced with stone. It would do much to make a reservoir and extend the area of cultivation when the welcome rains should once more fill the bed of the river. I passed through the various gangs, and though they were perhaps not doing a daily task which would gladden the heart of a P.W.D. official, yet they were working according to their lights and strength. I was greeted with beaming smiles when I stopped to question the workers of the various gangs.

From the river I went on to visit the segregation camp of the lepers. They were, as is always the case with this class of sufferers, a horrible sight, and yet there were not such bad cases as those mentioned in my chapter upon Sholapur. The number was about a hundred, and they exhibited every species and form of deformity. One poor little baby had been attacked; it had lost already both its feet, and its sightless eyes as it turned them towards us on hearing our approach were an awful spectacle. The mother, whose swollen and disfigured limbs indicated that she was approaching the climax of the disease, feebly tried to gather up her babe in her worn and ragged *sari*. Leprosy is an awful scourge, but one redeeming feature of the malady seems to be that when it attacks a victim it also takes away the spirit, and the sufferers become dazed, and lapse into a helpless and hopeless apathy, which seems to dim the awful effects of this dreadful malady. Nature perhaps steps in, and while surely claiming its victim, yet deadens the feelings. All I can say is that in all

the cases of leprosy I have seen during my wanderings, and these amount to several hundreds, I was always greeted with absolute indifference; no wailing, no appeals, as in the case of the starving, but a horrible and stony indifference. These particular sufferers were well looked after, and wisely restrained, as when once they entered the *lazzaretto* they were not allowed to enter the world again, but were kept there till a merciful death ended their career of suffering and disease. I inquired about the death-bill in the poor-house proper, and found that it had already amounted to fifty souls, and the daily average was four or five. Over seventy cases had been transferred to the city hospital. The chief cases in the poor-house hospital consisted of pulmonary diseases, which are so prevalent in India, and diarrhœa. The children were largely afflicted with ophthalmia in various stages. It was sad to see a poor little baby with a swarm of flies clustering upon its diseased eyelids. The patients showed distinct signs of the hospital assistants' attention.

I found many of the inmates with sores and wounds, but they were either bandaged or had been treated with mercurial ointment. As regards medical attendance, the paupers of Nagpur have very little to complain of, and the dispensary doctor seemed to be an intelligent man and solicitous for the welfare of those under his care.

Seeing that there were over a thousand inmates in the house, and the greater part of these completely run down, the mortality did not seem excessive. It is very true that the more serious cases of disease were, as I have remarked above, taken to the hospital, and their deaths would appear upon the hospital's books, but still the number was small. The superintendent showed me the death-roll, and I found his figures correct. He

added, that the more frequent deaths occurred amongst the new-comers who had put off seeking relief till it was too late.

I was shown the grave-yard, which is situate upon a piece of waste land about a mile from the poor-house. There were several graves already dug, and these were at a depth of five or six feet, so that the dead were ensured proper burial, and their mortal remains would be secure from the attacks of jackals and pariah dogs. In the Madras famine of 1876-77, one reads of many horrors of mutilated graves, but this could not occur in the last resting-place of the poor and needy of Nagpur.

The institution is certainly the best of its kind that I visited, either before or after, and may serve as an excellent example to similar places in the provinces of Central India, inasmuch as many poor-houses inspected hereafter left much to be desired. The whole affair is run entirely by natives. The total cost per month did not exceed 1600 rupees, and as there were over 1000 recipients of relief, it can be seen how far, with good administration, a small sum, judiciously expended, will go towards alleviating the sufferings of a starving Hindu population. I produce opposite the balance-sheet of the Institution for the month of December 1896, which will corroborate my statements.

Mr. Cleveland had given me a letter of introduction to Mr. Nedham, the Deputy-Commissioner, so when I had completed my tour of inspection of the poor-house, I drove off to interview this gentleman. I was fortunate in finding him at home, and at once plunged *in medias res.*

The Deputy-Commissioner informed me that a relief work had been started, in which the maximum numbers

MONTHLY ABSTRACT ACCOUNT OF THE POOR-HOUSE, NAGPUR, FOR MONTH OF DECEMBER 1896.

INCOME.

	R.	A.	P.
Donations	545	0	0
Monthly subscriptions	1512	8	0
Miscellaneous receipts, such as sale proceeds of Bhoosa, undisbursed wages of Poor-house servants, and refund of pay of sweepers engaged for the Relief Camps	10	9	11
Total receipts ...	2068	1	11
Add opening balance	694	13	1
Grand total ...	2762	15	0

EXPENDITURE.

		R.	A.	P.
1	Purchase of grain through Seth Jamnidas Potdar ...	1000	0	0
2	Lugras. Dhoties and cloth for coats purchased from Empress Mills, and sewing charges of coats, etc. ...	252	8	9
3	Wages of Poor-house servants for the month of November 1896	95	11	3
4	Erection of chappars and latrine for Poor-house inmates	109	0	0
5	Purchase of fuel	53	12	0
6	Purchase of salt, masala, vegetables, etc.	22	14	3
7	Purchase of linseed and kerosene oil	17	15	0
8	Purchase of earthen and iron pots, and repairs to cooking pots and tin-coating pots, etc.	23	15	3
9	Railway charges of persons sent to their homes in the Balaghat and Bandara districts	32	14	3
10	Miscellaneous expenses, such as purchase of medicines, stationery, diet of patients, etc.	32	14	8
	Total expenditure	1641	9	5
	Balance with Superintendent of Poor-house 30 15 10			
	Balance with R. B. Seth Kasherchandt Firm, Nagpur, January 1, 1897 ... 1090 5 9			
	Closing balance	1121	5	7
	Grand total	2762	15	0

(Signed) B. K. BOSE, Treasurer of Poor-house, and
KHANDE RAO PANDURANG, Superintendent of Poor-house.

(Handed to me on January 7, 1897.—F. M.)

of workers had reached 2500. At the time of speaking, not more than 1700 were employed, the others having gone off to their homes to prepare for the harvesting of the crops. For the last year both the *kharif* and *rabi* crops had been only 8-anna ones, or in other words a half-crop.

Balaghat was the worst place in the Nagpur district, and here there was real famine and distress.

In the city there was a great deal done by private charity, the recipients of which never reach the poor-house, so that it was very difficult to accurately gauge the actual distress within the city walls. The Government had conceded all the edible products of the reserved forest lands, and these would keep the people who could get at them going for a couple of months. After that period the number seeking relief would largely increase. The fodder-supply in the district was sufficient for present needs, and the good rains that had fallen in November and December, and also a few days previous to my visit, would relieve all anxiety as regards the cattle. The Deputy-Commissioner thought that they had not to fear any great mortality amongst the plough and store cattle. There had been an enormous migration of people from outlying districts to the city, but proper measures had been taken. Large *takavi* advances had been made to the ryots for land improvements. New tanks were being made all over the district, and the existing irrigation works repaired and improved. This would provide labour, and would reduce the number on the relief works. The impression left upon my mind after my interview was that the famine was not considered to be a very serious one in this district, and that the authorities thought themselves

fully capable of coping with any pressure that might occur.

Fresh from my visit to the poor-house, and with the sights I had seen there indelibly impressed upon my mind, I must confess that I conceived the idea that the officials had not sufficiently grasped the real importance of the situation. *Ex uno disce omnes*, and I must say that in my whole tour through the Central Provinces the more I saw of the crisis the more was this opinion confirmed. From high quarters the *hookum* (order) had gone forth, there was to be no famine in Central India, and the subordinates of Government were trying to carry out this order. How ineffectually it will be my duty to show hereafter.

At dinner that night I met one or two officers of the State, and the general tone of the conversation showed me that had it been advisable these men, who had every opportunity of arriving at the true state of affairs, could present a very different picture. One man mentioned incidentally that on a small *shikar* expedition he had come across the body of a woman, the corpse still warm; and yet this woman had died of inanition almost within grasp of help. This was not a solitary instance, each man there being able to recount similar recent experiences.

CHAPTER XII

RAIPUR

I STARTED the next morning for Raipur, which is some one hundred and ninety miles farther down the Bengal-Nagpur line. I passed the large military cantonment of Kamptee, which is nine miles from the city of Nagpur. This place of comparatively recent origin, as a military station was first formed there in 1821, and for about fifty years it was entirely under the jurisdiction of the military authorities. When the adjacent city of Nagpur was the capital of the State of that name, and the residence of the native court, it was extremely politic that a military station of some importance should be formed in the vicinity. *Autre temps autres mœurs*, and the decadence of the native power, combined with the rise of the British *raj* in these regions, has abrogated the necessity. It is, however, still kept up as one of the chief military stations of Central India, and in the cold weather the gay doings of the military make it a pleasant place of sojourn. The farther one got down the line, the wilder grew the country, till it culminated at Dongargargh in a series of hills clothed with wild and picturesque bamboo-jungle. On approaching the station the train enters a pass through the hills, the summit being pierced by a long tunnel. There is a legend that this jungle is the home of a man-eating



A GURU.

tiger, and while the railway was being constructed several natives were carried off as victims of this fierce monster. I am not aware if it still exists, but I do know that a few years back Cleveland was commissioned to institute a big hunting expedition, and, if possible, sweep this part of the country clear of these obnoxious pests. He told me that he had shot several tigers in this particular neighbourhood, and that he believed the country was now comparatively clear. He had to go down to the Sambulpur district if he wished to kill a tiger now-a-days.

One curious feature of the country is the groups of isolated rocks which crop out at intervals. They are enormous piles of stones heaped one upon the other, and present a similar appearance to the tors of Devonshire. The inventive native has no doubt many legends and *sagas* of these being the battle-fields of the gods, but I was not able to pursue any inquiry in this direction. I saw several instances of one rock balancing upon another, and one huge rock, which with its pedestal looked like an enormous mushroom, had a peepul-tree growing on the upper stone. There were several flags waving, which usually denote the presence of a *guru* or anchorite, and I am sure that this freak of nature was a subject of particular veneration to the simple-minded husbandmen of the vicinity. In India, as in ancient Greece and Rome, every river, mountain, hill, valley and plain is peopled with its imaginary tutelary deities; the natives are always prone to venerate, if not to worship, any of the ultra-fantastic handicraft of Dame Nature, and they have a mass of legendary lore which spreads over and coils round these scenes, even the highly educated having an apt mythological story to

account for anything out of the common order of things. The peculiar sanctity in which the rivers, streams, pools, and even tanks are held, can be well understood in that thirsty land, where the presence of the precious liquid means actual life and existence to the inhabitants. All over India you will find countless shrines, *lingas* or sacred stones, holy wells, sanctified groves and other places. A legend is attached to each of these; could one spare the time the study would be interesting. Folklore is imbued in the mind of every individual unit of the millions who people India, and perhaps more deeply engrained than in any other nation or people of the world's surface. Sleeman, more than any other European, got a complete insight into this matter, and the stories and legends which he has collected in his *Rambles and Recollections*, in the district of the sacred Nerbudda, must always be of the greatest interest to those attracted by the study of comparative mythology. In this quarter of the globe the natives use a very curious wheeled conveyance. It is called a *ringi*; and consists of a pole attached to two light wheels. The passenger sits astride this pole, and from personal experience I can testify that it is a very shaky mode of conveyance. These carts are drawn by a breed of oxen peculiar to these parts; they are very small and yet fast, as they are able to keep up a trot which is equal to that of an ordinary horse.

Horse-exercise is very little practised, and you see even the better class of natives using the native vehicles. In Kathiawar the reverse prevails, and you never see a native journeying except on pony-back, with that awful native pad-saddle, which invariably produces a sore back upon the poor beastie underneath.

I had now got into what is known as the *Chattisgargh*[1] district. The inhabitants consider themselves a distinct race from the other tribes of India, and call themselves by the distinguishing and proud title of *Chattisgaris.* The Commissioner of Raipur is known officially and locally as the Commissioner of Chattisgargh. In olden days the rajahs of Ratanpur held the sway, but about the year 750 A.D. the kingdom was split up, and a separate rajah ruled in Raipur. This district is known as one of the richest corn-growing countries of the world, and is known locally by the vernacular name of *Khalottee*, which being interpreted means the "granary of India." It is a vast amphitheatre, extending from the plains of Raipur, with ranges of hills forming a background, towards the north and west. These hills are the watershed, and when the monsoon comes, send down the fertilizing streams upon the immense alluvial plain lying at their feet. Rice is very largely grown in every spot suitable for its cultivation; and as far as the eye can reach one sees the terraced fields with their restraining *bunds.*[2]

The greater part of the corn is grown for export, and the inhabitants of the district rely upon the rice-crop for their staple food.

I have previously mentioned that land which is devoted to rice only bears one crop a year, and is entirely dependent upon the autumn rains for its proper production. Last year the crop completely failed, and thus the people were quickly brought down to starvation

[1] The kingdom of the thirty-six forts.

[2] A bank of mud to keep back the water. This causes a rice-growing country to look like the terraced vineyards on the shores of the Lake of Geneva.

point. For two or three seasons previously the out-turn of the rice-crop had been extremely patchy, and so the husbanded supplies were at a low ebb the time the last crop was due.

I may, perhaps somewhat ruthlessly, scatter one of the cherished theories of our childhood, at any rate as far as India and its rice-crop is concerned. Casting one's bread upon the waters and finding it after many days, has always been supposed to refer to the oriental method of sowing rice. I can only say that as far as I have seen in the gorgeous East this haphazard method does not prevail. A well-chosen nursery for the grain is carefully sown. When it has reached a sufficient height it is then lifted and replanted in tufts in the paddy fields proper, and the vivifying stream is then conducted into the fields thus planted. The rice-plants are allowed to grow in the actual water; the greater part of this soaks eventually into the ground; and as the rains cease the water disappears, and the crops in the month of October, under the influence of the burning sun, quickly ripen, when they are duly garnered. A threshing-floor is prepared by beating down the ground in a part of the field. A post is driven into the ground in the centre, and all the available oxen are attached by a rope to this and slowly driven round and round. In due time they tread out all the grain,—which is then handed over to the women, who winnow it by throwing it up into the air from a large shovel-shaped basket. The whole process of husbandry in India is of the most primitive description, and for that very reason doubly interesting. One sees in actual practice the agricultural customs which one is wont to associate with ancient biblical history.

Curiously enough, the peasants in Chattisgargh were themselves somewhat to blame for the failure of the rice-crop, and the consequent scarcity which produced such distress. In July 1896, the monsoon set in with great violence in the district, and a very heavy and unprecedented rainfall in the early part of the season was the result. Planting operations were concluded, and the natives, seeing that the season was yet young, were afraid that the excessive supply of water would rot the crops before they could mature. They accordingly cut the *bunds* which kept in the flood, and allowed the precious water to escape. Nemesis was following hard upon their heels, as no sooner had they done so than the monsoon suddenly ceased and no more rain fell. The crops, unable to resist the power of the sun, withered, and the hopes of the husbandmen for the year perished. Re-sowing was useless, and the food-supply for the coming year had failed.

Another thing which militated against the hard-pressed hinds was that, with a desire to gain a higher price for their toil, in a great many instances they had sown upon the lower grounds a higher quality of rice, which is suitable only for the uplands. In good seasons this speculation succeeds, but it is always attended with a certain amount of risk, and though the crop if gathered gains a higher market-price, yet in a bad year the result is total failure. One cannot blame the hard-working ryot for trying to put a few more *pies* in his purse, but it is a gamble pure and simple, and more frequently a case of "Heads you win, tails I lose." In the long run the ryot is the sufferer; but who could ever restrain the Hindoo from having a gamble when he willed? God knows, we Westerns, with our mines and Stock Exchange

and other means of adding to our purses, should not be the first to throw the stone at the patient ryot of our great dependency. Still, from the strict, political economist's point of view, the system is bad, and certainly "*Le jeu ne vaut pas la chandelle.*"

I have been betrayed into a lengthy excursion into the realms of agricultural methods in India, and especially in Chattisgargh; let me, however, return to Raipur.

When the train drew up, I found Cleveland, according to promise, awaiting me in company with Mr. Oswald, the principal of Rajkumar College, who was to be my host. In my entertainer I found an old college friend, whom I had lost sight of for over twenty years. It was a curious coincidence and a strange *rencontre*. As soon as we had exchanged salutations, I was bundled into my host's dog-cart, and hustled off to see the poor-house, as we should arrive there just as the inmates were receiving their evening meal. My host was the chairman of the municipality, and so this poor-house was strictly under his jurisdiction. It lay about two miles from the station on the confines of the native city. In spite of the unremitting attention of Mr. Oswald, the generality of the patients were in a very poor way. We discussed the question, and came to the conclusion that the allowance of food as per State regulations was not all-sufficing, and ought to be increased. The daily dole, though sufficient to keep life in the recipient, was not enough to build up his strength. The chairman had memorialized Government on this point, but had not received an official reply. In the meantime he was supplementing the Government grants with funds drawn from private charity. There were great numbers of the



THE POOR AND NEEDY.

Chambar jat,[1] and these were typical specimens of the country. Great hulking fellows, some five feet ten high, who ought to have been the backbone of the country, showed me their bodies, of which only the framework remained. One man, picking up the loose fold of wrinkled skin which represented the pit of his stomach, and indeed it was an awful pit, said sadly, "How can one work like that, sahib?"

Another, a *bundasi* or cattle-man, said he had lost all his cattle, that he had nothing, and showing me his limbs, where his joints stood out in awful prominence, and his ribs seemed to be bursting his tight-drawn skin, said there was nothing left but to die. Now both these men had been in the poor-house for over two months, and yet they were merely the effigies of men. This is a mistaken policy, and it would surely be better economy to attempt to build up these relics again more quickly and efficiently, that they might earn a day's wage by a day's work. As it was, they were merely dead-heads on the hands of the Government. I could have multiplied instances of this by the score, but these two will serve as types to point my argument.

Another case attracted my attention; it was that of a poor bag of female bones, which lay huddled up on a bundle of rags nursing an infant, or rather fondling it, for her means of supplying nourishment to her nursling had long ago failed. I asked the old woman who was with her what ailed the sufferer. She replied, in the poetic vernacular, that after child-birth "the wind struck her and she died." By this orientalism she wished to convey that, owing to cold and privation, her daughter had become paralyzed, and was practically dead to the

[1] Caste.

world, as the whole of her lower limbs had become stiff and useless. I suggested that it was a fitting case for the hospital, but when I mentioned the words *hakim* and *dukhankhana*, her eyes gleamed, and she muttered that "if it was God's will her daughter would die; but that she would rather she should die where she was than enter that accursed place." It is strange how deeply rooted is the antipathy of the natives to putting themselves into the hands of a duly-qualified physician, and more especially do they fear entering the dread portals of the hospital. The recent experiences of the plague searchers in Bombay have tended to bring to light the horror in which all places of segregation where the healing art is practised, are looked upon alike by the educated and ignorant native. They consider that their caste privileges will be broken down, and prefer death to desecration.

While we were making our tour of inspection the officials were busily mustering the inmates of the poor-house for their evening meal. When they had them all squatting in lines, with their *chatties* and platters before them, the distribution began. First of all came two stalwart and lusty Brahmins bearing huge pots of cooked rice. This was doled out to each person, man, woman, or child, and then followed another *kavas* (cook) bringing a big *chatti* filled with a savoury mess of chilies, oil, dhal, and other seasonings, a modicum of which was poured over each dole of rice. So strong are the religious feelings, that many of these poor people, though without doubt ravenous, would not begin to satisfy their cravings in the presence of the infidel *sahib logue*, and so we discreetly retired and left them to their prejudices and portions. There were about 300 adults in all, and a

great number of children, whose numbers I did not take. These people may be safely taken as a fair sample of the condition of the people in the district, and their forms and figures, or rather want of them, showed very plainly that the dread hand of Famine had them in its clutch. Many of the children exhibited that abnormal and swollen stomach, a sure sign of great privation, which heralds the approach of speedy death. I am sure that there were over a hundred children there upon whose grave the next waxing moon would shine. The general appearance of the whole crowd was much worse than I had remarked at Nagpur, and testified that the famine in the Chattisgargh district was only a too sad and patent fact. There were a few, but an almost infinitesimal portion, able to do light work, and these were employed in making mud-bricks during the day outside the precincts of the enclosure. By far the larger portion, however, were totally incapable of any form of exertion, and were there awaiting release either by recovery, or, what was far more probable, by death.

Here we had an instance of a poor-house looked after by an energetic, intelligent, and really philanthropic European, and yet he was unable to absolutely cope with the matter or hold out any reasonable hope of setting these poor people on their legs again. What then must have been the condition of those starving thousands whom Government aid or private charity could not reach? There could be but one solution, namely that Death must inevitably claim them as his victims.

The further I got into the heart of Central India, the more was my opinion confirmed that the dilatory measures of the supreme authorities were, and would

be, responsible for an enormous and abnormal mortality amongst its suffering millions.

On our way home to dinner we looked into the Club, and there I met a cousin of mine whom I had not seen for years. She had married the station doctor, and was settled at Raipur. This place was fated to be remarkable for unexpected meetings, as at dinner, when with my host, Cleveland, the Deputy-Commissioner and the writer, we formed a pleasant *partie carrée*, we discovered that we all four were contemporaries at Oxford, two being members of Balliol and two of Keble College. For four men to meet unexpectedly in a small up-country station who had all been friends at the University, and who had not seen each other for nearly a score of years, was, to say the least of it, a curious coincidence. Conversation naturally turned upon the famine question, and as the Deputy-Commissioner had just returned from a lengthened tour in the worst-affected part of his district, he was able to tell me a great many interesting details of his work.

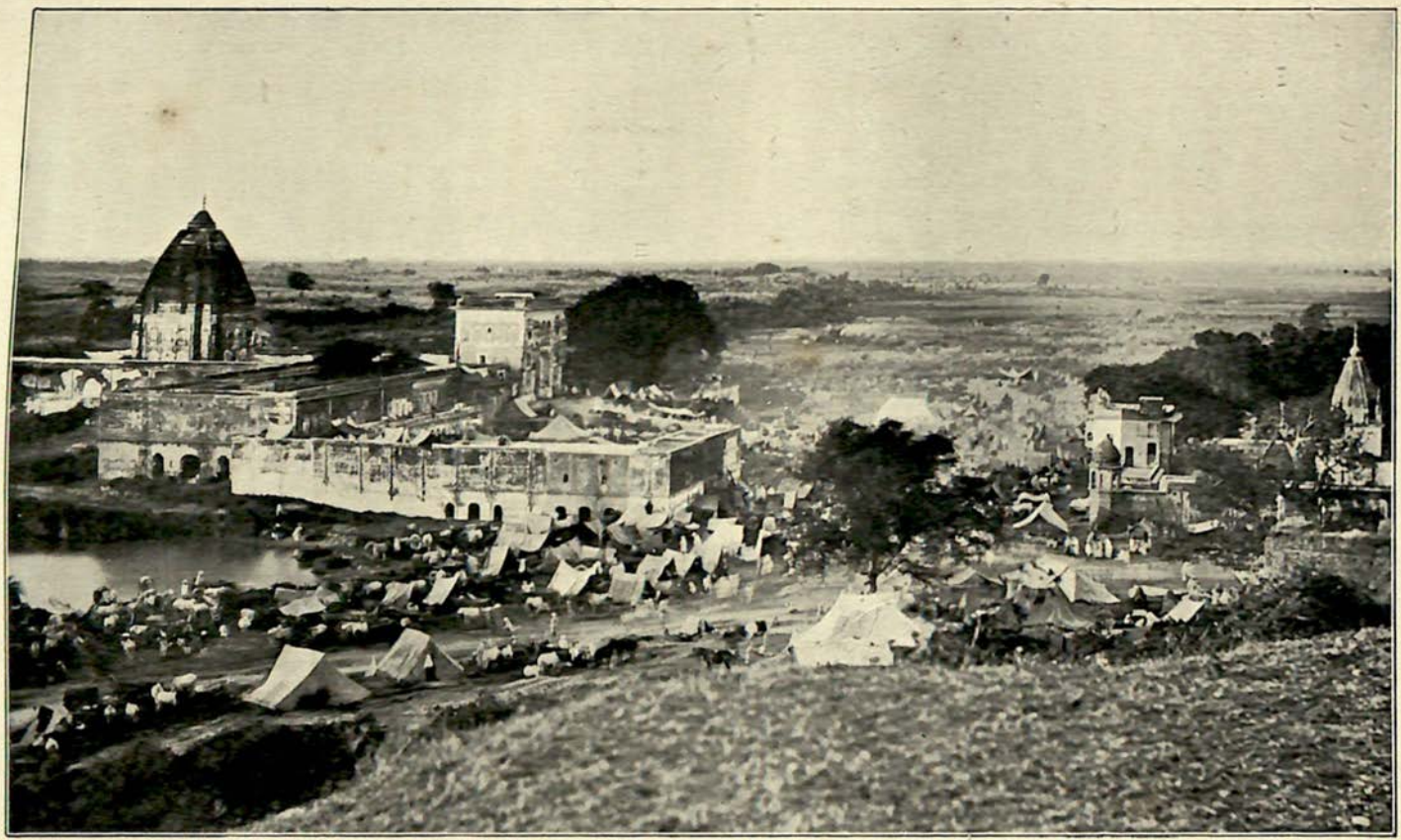
Ere the sun was up next morning, Oswald and myself were in the dog-cart ready for a tour of inspection of the native city and the public relief works. Test works had been opened in the previous October, and had demonstrated the necessity for repressive measures being at once taken in hand. The works I inspected were in the immediate vicinity of the city, in fact two were within the confines of the city itself. They consisted of the filling-up of old and disused tanks. These places were merely hot-beds of disease, and the work, apart from supplying employment for the workers, was in itself an excellent sanitary measure. These tanks, relics of a bygone time, had ceased to be a necessity

for the population, since the establishment of the water-works some few years back. There were in all about 8000 souls engaged on these works, which were being run by the municipality and a managing committee, of which my host was the head and ruling spirit.

On our return we paid a visit to Rajkumar College, and there I made the acquaintance of several of the future rulers of India. These colleges, as their name implies, are for the *kumars* or heirs-apparent of the native princes of India. The Government has already established three of these excellent institutions. There is one in Rajkote for the native princes of Kathiawar, which owes its great success to the unremitting and life-long toil of its late lamented principal, Mr. McNaghten. Another has been founded at Ajmere, which bears the title of Mayo College, and draws its pupils from the Punjaub and the native States of Rajputana; while Raipur supplies the needs of Central India. There is another in Madras for the sons of Zemindars, but of that I am unable to speak. With regard to the other three, I have seen and known the excellent work that they have done and are doing, and feel convinced that this is one of the most judicious steps that Government has ever taken. Any one who like myself has had any experience of a native court and its system of flattery and intrigue, to say nothing of the dominant influence of the Zenana, will know that better measures could not be taken for the proper formation of the minds and morals of the young scions of royalty, who in due time must ascend the thrones of their fathers.

I had arranged to tiffen with Mr. Laurie, and so as soon as I had returned I set off again to his bungalow. From him I gained the following details. Raipur is the

largest district of the Central Provinces, embracing as it does an area of twelve thousand square miles, with a population of a million and a half. We are not accustomed to deal with square miles, so let us put it into acreage, with which at home we are more familiar. The acreage then of the district of Raipur works out to seven million, six hundred and eighty thousand (7,680,000). The acreage of Wales is 4,722,573, so that the superficial area of this portion of the Central Provinces, for which Mr. Laurie was responsible, is more than half as large again as the Principality. It is of course beyond the power of one human being to be constantly in touch with such an enormous area and its inhabitants; while a tour of the whole district cannot possibly be completed during the few cold-weather months at the disposal of the European officials. The Deputy-Commissioner had just returned from a tour of inspection in the Dharmapura *taluka*, where he had found the condition of things very bad indeed. In one village there had occurred over twenty deaths from starvation, and yet the *kotwal* or watchman had done nothing to alleviate the distress, as he was afraid of acting upon his own responsibility, and awaited the arrival of "his Honour." In another village many more were on the brink of death, which the timely arrival of the Commissioner averted—many of the poor creatures were unable to stand, and these were by no means isolated cases, but fairly represented the condition of the country. In a voice in which there were tears, the Deputy said—"By God, it is too awful. There are over 1300 villages affected in my district alone, so you may judge of the amount of distress there is; the staff is quite inadequate to cope with the difficulty, and God



A MELA, RAIPUR.

knows what will happen. Village relief works have been started all over the place. There are, as I have said, 1300 villages requiring help, and an average of forty in each village, so this would represent over half a lac of people." There was no doubt that great mortality had taken place already, and it was almost impossible to say definitely where the death-roll would cease.

A real and burning question when the famine was got in hand would be the question of seed-grain, and it was a grave matter which the Government would have to face, or otherwise the horrors of the present season would be prolonged into the next year. Attempts had been made to buy grain privately and supply the peasants, but they had failed, owing to the vast area which required aid, and also from an insufficiency of funds. The Government were now offering very favourable terms for *takavi* advances free of interest; and with a possible rebate later. It was however only the better class of ryots who would avail themselves of this. It would be quite useless as regards the *sudha* (low-caste) masses of the people. It was clearly evident to me that the burden thrown upon the officials was greater than human strength could bear, and though to a man they were making almost superhuman efforts, yet their numbers must, to be of any avail, be increased, and their hands considerably strengthened.

In the telegram which I sent home I touched upon the mortality question in Central India, but did not pledge myself to any definite number. My wire, it seems, provoked a question in the House, which a friend sent me subsequently, and which I here annex. I can only say that the numbers quoted were not

furnished by me, nor did they, as far as my knowledge went, appear in the copies of the daily English papers who were subscribers to Reuter's Special Service.

"*House of Lords,*
"*Monday, Feb. 9th.*

"THE INDIAN FAMINE.

"LORD KINNAIRD inquired whether the Government were in a position to affirm or contradict the statement made by Reuter's Agency, that in the Central Provinces of India many deaths from starvation had already taken place, and were taking place; that many persons were on the brink of starvation, and that a district with a population of a million and a half was almost without food-supply; in the worst district of each of the affected provinces what was now the selling price of grain in common use in towns and in the interior; and whether the Government would give an assurance that whenever the price of grain in any district was raised to 18 lbs. per rupee, they would direct that grain should be imported into such district?

"The EARL of ONSLOW, in reply, said he was not in a position to contradict the assertion that in the district of Raipur there had been 250,000 deaths, but he would be very much surprised if it turned out to be correct. He could only assure the noble lord that the statement made by Reuter's Agency was quite contrary to the information which the Government had received. He could not at the moment say what the number of deaths at Raipur may have been, but the Secretary of State had communicated with the Government of India by telegraph, and he would be happy to hand his noble

friend a copy of the telegram received in reply. A reference to the report of the Famine Commissioners would show that the actual price of grain in a particular district was no real criterion of the power of the population to purchase. For instance, taking the district of Raipur, on December 31st, 1896, rice and wheat were obtainable at 10 seers per rupee, whilst in 1895 (the year before the famine prices) rice was obtainable at 16 seers per rupee, and wheat at 16½ seers per rupee. He had received a telegram from the Viceroy that day which he believed would go a long way to allay the apprehension of the noble lord. The Viceroy telegraphed—'Our latest information is generally re-assuring. Steady prices generally; and fall which has now begun in Punjab and North-West Provinces, and sufficiency of visible supplies for daily requirements, are favourable indications. Punjab prices reported 15 to 20 per cent. lower than two months ago. Apprehension of failure of stocks would be indicated by rise of prices. Spring crops promise well in Northern India and Hindustan, and ought to add considerably to existing stocks. Sufficiency of existing stocks for all probable emergency. Not capable of precise quantitative answer, but no reason to doubt correctness of policy affirmed in your dispatch (No. 10, of June 15), that trade, as a whole, can supply food demands better and more effectively than the Government.'"


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CHAPTER XIII

BILASPUR

THE evening of February 1 saw me in company with Mr. Cleveland on my way to Bilaspur, which is about seventy miles down the line. We started at 4.30 p.m., and arrived at our destination at 7.30. The Commissioner had very kindly offered me a shake-down in the Circuit House, to which he was going with the intention of establishing his office there for a couple of days. In Central India, at the most important stations, the Government has established a series of bungalows, which go by the name of Circuit Houses. They serve the same purpose for the grand officials of the land that the dawk bungalow does for the humbler portion of the travelling European public. A *cutcherry*[1] is generally attached, and here the high officials on their tours of inspection hold high court and dispense justice in their different departments. As a continuous stream of *burra sahib logue*, with their crowd of dependents and clerks, are constantly on the move round the Provinces, these Circuit Houses serve a very useful purpose, and far exceed in comfort and even luxury the poor and humble travellers' rest-house. Cleveland and myself were both travelling light, and so had not brought with us our *mistri* or cook. It was impossible to make a *bandobust*

[1] Court-house.

for food in the Circuit House, so we therefore arranged on the way down that we would take our *khana* at the refreshment-rooms at the station, and simply use the *cutcherry* as a dormitory. It was naturally quite dark when we arrived at the station, and as the Railway Volunteers had just broken up camp, and were returning to their various homes down the line, the scene on the platform was a busy one. With the help of a lantern dimly burning, our impedimenta were collected; and orders given to our respective boys to see our effects were taken to the house. It was especially important that we should get our mail that night, and so, having ordered dinner, we dashed off in a tonga to the post-office. We drove along the dark and solitary road for some time, and I remarked that the dawk office was a long way off, when the driver turned into a compound and pulled up at the dawk bungalow. Mad with rage and starving with hunger, we set to work and abused the driver, who had mistaken our orders of dawk office (post-office) for dawk bungalow. After cursing that driver in our very best, we at last got him to understand. "*Place for the letters, not place for the travellers, you son of an owl.*" "*Bahut atcha, sahib,*" he meekly replied, and we began to retrace our steps. Eventually we arrived at the right place, but all was in darkness. We prowled about, and with the light of one of the tonga lamps discovered a sleeping *peon* in the back verandah. Him we quickly roused, and demanded the post-master. In due time the official appeared, and armed with the majesty of the law, as represented by the Abkhari Commissioner, and the sanctity of the press by your humble servant, we at last persuaded the *tepal-wallah*[1] to open his office and look

[1] Letter-man.

for our mail. After digging about amongst a mass of correspondence, with the aid of a very smoky cocoa-nut oil lamp, he unearthed one small letter addressed to me. On further investigation this turned out to be a small bill, which had been following me round up-country. This then was the result of our feverish search for home news; we had driven about four miles from the station in the dark, cut a lot of time to waste, and our bag was a bill. Angry and disappointed, we drove back to dinner, which we found waiting our arrival. In the station-yard was Cleveland's *chupprassie*, mounting guard over our luggage. It seemed that no bullock-carts were procurable, and that our boys had gone off on a voyage of discovery. The manager of the refreshment-rooms at Bilaspur is a German. He is quite a character, and well known to all who use the line for his quaint ways and affability. In fact, it is quite one of the features of the Bengal-Nagpur line to dine with Strauss at Bilaspur if possible. On this occasion he had out-shone himself, and gave us a really first-class dinner. When we had got to coffee and cheroots we invited the old fellow in, and he kept us in fits of laughter with a series of funny stories told in an inimitable way. The time flew by, and to our horror we found it was nearly midnight. On parting with our host, he told me in German that he would make a special dish for our tiffen the next day. "*Ach, mein lieber Herr! zum Mittagsessen will ich Ihnen etwas Delicates machen—Sauerkraut mit Schinken.*"

We found our *tonga-wallah* coiled up asleep in his *chuddah*, and also the faithful "belted one" still mounting guard over our heavy baggage. Our servants had come back and removed our light packages, but the *chupprassie*

had received orders to watch the remainder till morning. We drove down the same road that we had previously gone earlier in the evening, and about a quarter of a mile beyond the post-office found the Circuit House, where we turned in, thankful to get to bed, as we were dog-tired. I took a bit of a Europe morning the next day, and long before making my appearance the Commissioner had started off for his work, leaving word that he would meet me at the station at noon for breakfast. I spent the forenoon in working up arrears of work and correspondence. Just as I was starting for tiffen, a telegram was handed to me from my chief in Bombay, telling me to get on as soon as possible to Jubbulpur, as I should meet there Sir Roper Lethbridge, who, in the interests of the *Standard*, had just come down from a tour in the Punjaub and North-West Provinces, and that he would be able to afford me much useful and reliable information. Orders from head-quarters must always be obeyed, and so I gave directions to Domine to see that we started for Jubbulpur by the night-mail.

I must confess I was a bit disappointed, as I had made arrangements to go a detour to Ratanpur, and to that lovely spot upon the Mahanadi, Sambulpur. The former town was the old capital of the self-contained kingdom of Chattisgargh. It ceased to be so in 1787, and its fort and ancient palace have been allowed to lapse into decay. The town covers an area of fifteen square miles, and contains within its walls a very large mango-tope. The Brahmins of Ratanpur are still the leaders of the sect in the whole district of Chattisgargh, and the city is renowned for its special sanctity. There are an enormous number of tanks within the city, and the constant use of this polluted water has brought in its train the usual

disease. In fact, one of the features of Ratanpur is that every third man, woman, or child of its inhabitants is victim either of elephantiasis or leprosy. Sambulpur, on the contrary, from what I have heard, is a most charming place, and the jungle abounds in large game, while the Mahanadi swarms with *mahseer* of a size and gameness to make the mouth of the angler water at the prospect. This too is the country of the wild elephant, and tigers are plentiful; while buck and small game are very abundant. The Collector is a *shikari* of the first order, and I am afraid to say the exact number of tigers that have fallen to his rifle, but it is one of the records of Indian tiger-shooting. I bowed to the fates, and went off to tiffen.

My friend turned up at the station, and I was quite shocked with his appearance; he looked quite ghastly and white, and I asked him what on earth was the matter? He said he had just come away from the poor-house, and had seen such horrible sights there that he felt knocked out of time. Here was a strong man, a splendid athlete, in fact, a double-blue at Oxford and a Rugby international, completely unmanned by the sights of suffering humanity which he had just witnessed. I was in a way prepared for horrors, but what I did find on arrival at the poor-house far exceeded anything I had possibly imagined.

The poor-house at Bilaspur is situate amongst a grove of jungle mango-trees outside the native quarter of the town. It consisted of a mere thorn-fence, with a series of rough grass-huts round the sides. The space was quite inadequate for the number; in fact the authorities were trying to solve the problem that Suraj-u-d-daulah essayed, and over six hundred souls

were crowded into a space sufficient perhaps for one hundred and fifty. The stench, filth and dirt, the natural consequences of such over-crowding, was simply appalling and indescribable. Outside the pale I found a man dying of dysentery, absolutely uncared for. A couple of yards away lay the still warm corpse of a man, from which the flies arose in myriads as I approached to examine him. A group of poor skeletons, scarcely human beings, were squatting close by, worn down by suffering and disease to the last state of callousness and apathy. I questioned them about this man, and they replied—"Yes, sahib, he is dead. He crawled here this morning, but was too late for the morning meal, and he has died. He told us he had had no food for four days." Here was a man who died of starvation under the very eyes of the authorities, and within hand-grasp of the food which might possibly have saved his life. Scattered all round the mango-tope, wherever they could find a scrap of shade, lay huddled in groups two or three hundred starving and emaciated wretches, who were the over-flow from the poor-house proper, or rather improper, for it was the worst managed I had seen in my whole tour. I have been into and through some dozen or two of poor-houses, but Bilaspur stands out by itself as a pattern of monumental mismanagement. When I had been dodging about for nearly an hour, a sepoy, very much in undress uniform, strolled up from the kitchen, where no doubt he had been discussing *pies*, *rotikhana*, and *dustoorie*[1] with his fellow-officials. Inside the walls, if one can call the thorn-fence such, the sights were of the most horrible and pitiable description, and I say

[1] Money, food, and perquisites. These are the perpetual and all-engrossing topics of conversation of the lower-class natives.

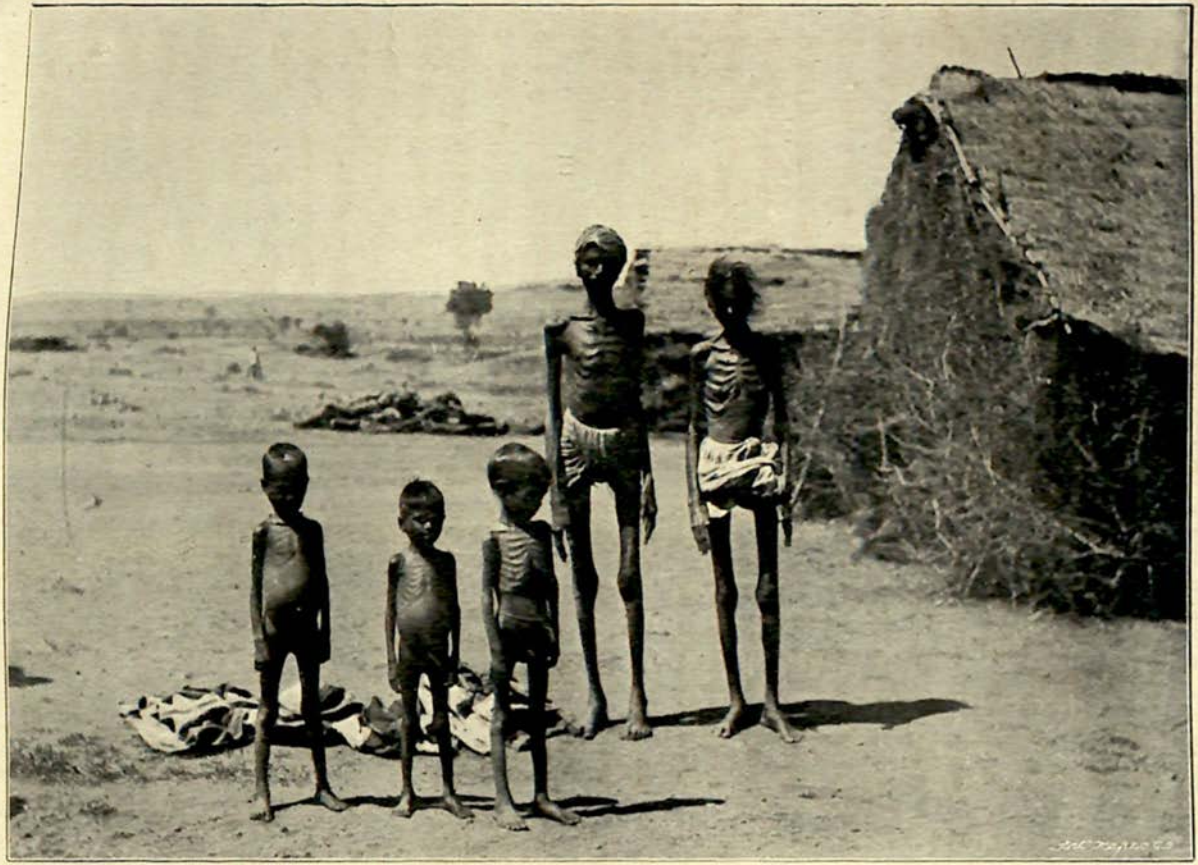
advisedly and with due reason, from personal observation, that the inmates of this supposedly charitable institution were being condemned to a horrible and lingering death. Many of them told me that they had been there for months, and could not get enough to eat. In fact, the universal wail was, "*Bhukha, bhukha, sahib. Mahaaraj, sahib, ham bukha hai; dekho, sahib*" ("Hungry, hungry, sahib. Lord sahib, I am hungry; look, sahib"); and they pointed to their bodies, where the bones showed clearly the very articulation of the limbs, and their joints stood out in awful prominence, like skeletons tightly covered with skin. One poor little child, whose mother said she was five years old, was a sheer horror, and looked more like an anatomical monstrosity than a human being. The skin of her face was so tightly drawn back that all her teeth were exposed, while on her skull one could see clearly the very joints of her cranium. Her arms were not any thicker than my little finger, and her thighs about the circumference of my thumb. I lifted her up, poor soul, and put her weight down at about twelve pounds, and yet she was five years old and had all her teeth. This creature with her mother had been in the house six weeks, and yet was not suffering from any organic disease. This was starvation pure and simple. Another man, a mere skeleton, had been receiving the Government dole for two months and a half, and he certainly did not weigh five stone, as I lifted him quite easily. The greater part of the women were quite naked, except for a rag round the loins, and were brought so low that they had lost all sense of the innate modesty which is so strong a characteristic of the native woman in India. Instead of, as is generally the case, retiring and trying to cover themselves from the gaze of the

sahib, these women, overcome with misery and destitution, thrust their naked bodies before our eyes, and boldly and lamentably kept up an incessant wail for food and clothing. Another case was a baby lying screaming with hunger upon a bundle of rags, while its poor mother, with the tears streaming down her face, pointed to her wasted form, from which her sources of supply for her baby had long since dried up, and implored us by the gods not to let her only male child die. Her husband was at the tea-gardens in Assam, and how could she face him on his return when her baby-boy was dead? It is scarcely conceivable, but none the less a fact, that notwithstanding the very apparent and appalling famine which was prevalent in this district, the Government of India at such a crisis had chosen this time for demanding from the civil authorities of Bilaspur a careful report and returns showing the effect that the present distress was having or likely to have upon the cloth industry of the district. The whole of the clerical staff were fully occupied from early morn till dewy eve in preparing the most elaborate and careful statistics upon this all-engrossing topic. In the meantime the actual inhabitants of Bilaspur were dying of starvation, while under the supposed ægis of the Government and within their very gates. I mentioned previously that my opinion was that the famine in the Central Provinces was grossly mismanaged. I collected tangible proofs of this daily, till I had to hand a mass of reliable and irrefutable evidence, which showed only too clearly that the officials and those responsible had not, and did not, fully recognize the gravity of the situation. With reference to the poor-house, there can be no doubt that in addition to supineness and mismanagement, there was decided

fraud going on, and the poor hopeless and helpless inmates were being condemned by a paternal Government to a slow, horrible, and lingering death by starvation. I here came across the first specimens of "Famine Down," which is produced by long-continued starvation. At certain stages of want a fine down of smooth hair appears all over the bodies of the afflicted. It has a most curious look, and gives the wearer a more simian look than ever. When this has once appeared, I heard from those learned in such matters that the *Ultima Thule* of privation had been reached, and that there was no hope for the sufferer except a speedy release by merciful death. There were more than a score of souls who had reached this stage, and their bodies were covered from head to foot with the soft-looking black fur.

Among the children there were many instances of spleen, and the swollen feet and stomach which herald the speedy approach of the king of terrors. In the case of these poor wretches death had lost its sting, and a speedy dissolution would be welcomed as the simplest way out of their troubles. The motto that might appropriately be placed over the gates of the poor-house is, "Let all abandon hope who enter here." These are strong words, but out of a full heart the mouth speaketh, and one's gorge rises when one sees undeserved misery, which might be alleviated, allowed to have its full bent without let or hindrance.

In my telegram home I called attention to the abnormal condition of activity on the part of the labour agents for the tea-gardens of Assam. I used the word "coolie-snatchers," which is the term by which these recruiting agents are known generally in India. Whether it was the use of this term, though used in by no means



BEYOND THE PALE, BILASPUR.

an invidious sense, or whether it was that my facts were not considered reliable, my wire called forth an indignant letter to the *Times*, from the Secretary of the Tea Association, who pointed out "that the tea industry does not seek to separate families, but to promote the settlement of households in a province where food is abundant and famines are unknown." This may be true in theory, but it is open to question in fact. I interrogated over a score of women individually in the poor-house at Bilaspur, and the invariable answer given in reply to my question "Where is your husband?" was, "He has gone to Assam to the gardens." If the proverb *ex uno disce omnes* holds good, surely this score of instances was fairly conclusive, that there were a very large proportion of wives who had been deserted by their husbands going off to seek their fortunes in these favourable and famineless districts in the north of the peninsula. I pursued my inquiries further, and found that the civil doctor of the station was passing 1600 tea-coolies per week from this district alone. The normal figures in previous years were at this particular season of the year not above 200. I think these facts and figures are fairly conclusive that the trade of coolie-snatching showed unwonted activity, and that there must be a very large number on the whole, if out of some 250 women in the poor-house, over a score on my own finding were starving and husbandless.

I had an interview later with the Deputy-Commissioner, who had been at the *cutcherry*, occupied the whole day in trying a grain dacoity case. I told him what I had seen, and he was as much shocked as I was, and immediately set off to inquire into the matter. He had only the day before come in from

a tour of the district, and had not as yet been able to visit the poor-house. I commented upon the lack of supervision, and he replied that, according to the code, overseers were not to receive money wages but be paid in kind, and that under these circumstances suitable men would not apply for the post. (I should like to have had the hanging or whipping of those overseers.) Money was now to be given, and the Deputy hoped for a better state of things in the near future. There had too been a sudden influx upon the poor-house, as the numbers had suddenly jumped up from two to five hundred, and the authorities were caught unawares. Forewarned, however, is forearmed, and experience of previous famines must have told that in cases of this nature it is well to be prepared for the worst. I heard afterwards that since my visit the most strenuous efforts were being made, so that throwing the lurid light of public opinion upon the remote and obscure district of Bilaspur may have resulted in some benefit accruing to its suffering inhabitants. If such was the case I shall feel that my mission was not altogether a futile one.

CHAPTER XIV

KATNI

I WAS destined to pass another night in the train, but as I had been in a comfortable bed for the last three nights, I was well able to face the journey. The Commissioner and I had a farewell banquet, prepared by our excellent friend Strauss, in his very best style, and afterwards separated on our respective routes, he off to Sambalpur, I off to Katni junction, where I hoped to arrive at noon the next day. I should have liked, if possible, to have made the journey on this line of railway during the daylight, but the only service that one can use with any comfort to oneself is the mail; and even this takes sixteen hours to accomplish the hundred and ninety odd miles between Bilaspur and Katni. It can be done much quicker, if required, of which I had practical, ocular demonstration. The managing-director of the line and his staff arrived in a special train at Bilaspur while we were dining. My train left at 7.30, and the special was timed to leave two hours later, and to proceed to Katni. When I was breakfasting at Umaria, on the way up, the next morning at about nine o'clock, the special ran through. It had been up to Katni and back, having passed us in the night, and was returning to Bilaspur. I arrived at Katni some three hours later. *Festina lente* is the

motto and method pursued by the dear old Indian railway system on these cross lines, though I have found on the main routes that the travelling is both rapid and comfortable.

Not being a *burra sahib*, but a poor and humble penman, I was obliged to content myself with the mail. The country that one passes through, so my friends told me, is some of the wildest and most picturesque jungle and forest land of India. Game abounds, and it was here, some few months previous to my passage, that a wild elephant conceived it his duty to charge the train in transit; the result being similar to what Stephenson predicted would be the fate of the "coo" if wishing to enter into conflict with his then new-fangled notion of steam transport. The picture papers of the period made the most of the incident, and a graphic scene was the result of the special artist who wasn't there. Anyhow, the elephant got the worst of it, was knocked down the *khud*,[1] and an end put to its sufferings by an intrepid sportsman who happened to be travelling by the train. We crossed the Pendah valley on an immense earthwork, which is a triumph of modern engineering, and is supposed to be one of, if not the highest, mud-banks of its kind in the world. Umaria is the centre of the coal-fields of Central India, and the output of coal from here is increasing yearly. There is no doubt that the coal of Central India and Mysore enters into very serious competition with that of Bengal, which in former years had the absolute monopoly of the "country-born" fuel. The mills of Bombay are taking largely to the use of Indian coal, owing to its cheapness; and the Swansea coal-trade, which in former years used to be of

[1] Slope, declivity.



A GROUP OF ABORIGINES.

great importance, has received a serious check by the discovery of carboniferous regions in India. I found at certain stations along the line a number of beggars awaiting the arrival of the train, and begging from the passengers. It was perhaps my misfortune and not my fault that I did not come across the benevolent rajah (as depicted in an illustrated home-paper of the period) riding on an elephant—without a mahout—the animal being led along by a string presumably passed through its trunk, while the rajah distributed *baksheesh* with unsparing hand to the crowds of his subjects prostrating themselves in the dust before him, in his royal progress!

The man who trusts to his pen is often fertile in imagination, but his word-pictures pale before the florid imagery of the pencil. I must have one more growl at my artist friends. A moving scene was given of a railway-station, with a philanthropic globe-trotter dashing out of his carriage and distributing unmistakable English-made penny-loaves to the crowds of emaciated natives awaiting his bounty. As a matter of fact, nine-tenths of the people prefer starvation to food given them by an accursed *Kafir*, and not one in a hundred would even look at, much more eat, *Bilati rhoti*.[1] The staple form of bread is the chuppati, in colour and consistence resembling nothing more closely than a piece of leather which has been soaked for hours by the cobbler previously to being applied to an old boot needing re-soling.

Well, the artists serve their purpose, even if they raise a laugh amongst the *cognoscenti* at their ignorance of the detail of oriental life and thought.

[1] English bread.

I had three or more hours to wait at Katni before I could get to Jubbulpur, and so instinctively turned my steps towards the poor-house. A colleague of mine some months previously had done the poor-house of Katni, and the account he sent to the *Times of India* led me to suppose I should find a repetition of Bilaspur. I am glad to say that since his visit matters had very much improved, and the working of this institution was in much better fettle. I cannot do better than give some extracts from his article, which appeared in the *Times of India* of January 15—

"Katni is a junction of the East Indian and Bengal-Nagpore railways a little way east of Jubbulpur, but the name is not officially recognized. Moorwara is the name of the town and *tehsil*, and these are in the Jubbulpur district of the Central Provinces. There are extensive lime-kilns less than two miles away, which employ 2000 people. Moorwara begins only a few yards from the railway-station, and is a small town of 9600 inhabitants, with a fine market-place; there is no building. From the appearance of the houses, and the large number of *bunniahs*, one would suppose the place to be prosperous, and I am told that before the Bengal-Nagpore railway came here, Moorwara used to be an important grain-centre; but much of the trade is now diverted to Jubbulpur, and the *bunniahs* have become reduced. Nevertheless, they subscribed liberally when famine relief was begun here about eighteen months ago. As in other parts of the Central Provinces, relief was not officially undertaken in earnest till the beginning of December. It was on the 5th of last month that the local poor-house was put on provincial funds. For more than a year previously, the

terrible distress and mortality, similar to that of Banda, Saugor, Jubbulpur and Damol, were left to the inexperienced and unregulated efforts of private and municipal charity.

"Five hundred rupees was given by the municipality, Rs.1500 was subscribed by private individuals, and Rs.2200 was given, with the sanction of Government, by the District Council. With these funds, a voluntary committee has been struggling to the best of its ability to relieve the local distress. The late Deputy-Commissioner, Mr. Duff, was here in October; poor man, I saw him a month ago at Jubbulpur, and I hear to-day that he died last week of pneumonia. The Commissioner and Chief-Commissioner were here a few days before I crossed their path in Saugor. The new Deputy-Commissioner, with Mr. Maw, C.S., whose appointment on special famine duty I mentioned about five weeks ago, was here on Sunday. So the Government ought to be aware of what is going on. Sixteen paupers died in the poor-house since yesterday. Five or six were dying when I visited the place this morning. One expired while I was there, and another, who had died already, was carried to burial—decently enough—before my eyes. Eleven died the day before yesterday—that is, up to yesterday's report; eighteen and seventeen died the two days before, and a day or two before that again a maximum of twenty-two deaths in twenty-four hours was reached. Perhaps as many die in the town and in the fields. Two bodies were found one morning much eaten away by dogs or jackals.

"With these perfectly awful facts before us, and knowing that twenty or thirty little places as bad as Katni

can be found, may the question not be asked, Is this state of things to be accepted as inevitable? And are we to look forward calmly to months of it to come, as there have been months of it past?

"The only local authorities are the *tahsildar* and the hospital assistant; and the former seems particularly kind to the perishing paupers. But they have little experience, and less authority to spend money, which since December 5 is Government money, and to initiate radical reforms. The district officers are the men to lay down peremptory orders and then see for themselves how they do. I know the district officers are worked off their feet. But so are the *tahsildars* and Extra Assistant-Commissioners, and Deputy-Collectors throughout the famine tract. It is a time of hard work. I am working harder than I have worked for some years. Besides, there are officers specially set apart to do famine duties. One of them might leave his statistics, tables, returns, registers, and reports, and keep the people from perishing. As things are, a man dies on the bare ground, in the very midst of the other paupers, as I saw several dying this morning, with no one to do anything for him since the last meal, and the last visit of the doctor. But when he is dead, the *muhurrir* brings his writing materials, and the servants gather about, and the person's name, sex, time of life, caste, occupation, and place of residence, and the charge for burial, are recorded with the care which characterizes our Government, and the record goes off to the *tahsildar*, from whom it will be submitted to the Chief-Commissioner, and perhaps to the Government of India. Nobody seems to think that in the unavoidable absence of a

hospital assistant, some kind of nurse to be kind to the dying people, even to see that they die in the hospital-shed, is more important than ten *muhurrirs*.

"Let us take it for granted that every pauper, even those who are unable to crawl out of their sleeping-places, gets the full allowance of food ordered for him. There are two things about this poor-house enough to account for its being the place of death it is. First, the people ought to be fed twice a day, as they used to be when the poor-house was first opened, although the allowance of food was not as large then as it is now, under Government. When the Deputy-Commissioner was here two days ago, he expressed a wish that the people might be fed twice a day, but some difficulty was raised, and the committee are to meet to-morrow to consider whether it is practicable to act on the Deputy-Commissioner's suggestion. Meanwhile a dozen more paupers will die, and another dozen become ready to die. The second thing is to keep the paupers from leaving the poor-house. This is not a matter of opinion, but a matter of famine law, and it should have been diligently put in hand on December 6. If an enclosure with walls ready-made be not available, a wall may be built, or a trench dug, or a broad hedge laid out, or watchmen appointed. But to keep up a poor-house without confining the inmates, is to throw away money, and to condemn the paupers to a lingering instead of a speedy death. The place as I saw it this morning consisted of three lines of grass huts, roomy and warm enough, forming three sides of a square. One line had been burned down, but it was to be rebuilt. The fourth line was a fence of twigs, too light to obstruct a child, and the *chuppraśsie* pointed out

several places where the twigs had been pulled up or trodden down by paupers wishing to go into the town. Moreover, the back wall of many of the huts had been broken through for the same purpose. In fact, the gate was the only part of the enclosure where it was not quite easy to go in and out. And nobody denies that all the paupers who are strong enough to walk, go into the town as much as they please. While I was there a batch of about fifty boys and girls, runaways, were brought to the gate by four men who had been sent after them, and the principal *chupprassie* scolded them soundly. Somebody said the men and women would not come back when they were called.

"Inside, the place was clean, and the people, men, women, and children, were sitting and lying all over the ground. A few were in the huts. The sick and the dying lay among the rest. Some of these too were in the two hospital-sheds. The *chupprassie* said the number of sick was twenty or thirty; but the higher figure would only be two days' deaths. I could not always tell the sick from the utterly emaciated, but the number of the latter was very large. The *chupprassie* told me that the *tahsildar* came every morning to inspect the place; the hospital assistant once a day to treat the sick; and one member of the Relief Committee daily, at the hour when the paupers were fed. Also, that the dead were buried in sight of a policeman, who saw that the graves were dug four feet deep. I have almost forgotten to say that the site of the poor-house is about a quarter of a mile from the outermost dwellings of the town; but it is very near the river.

"I went to the place where the dead of the poor-house are buried. It is half-a-mile from the poor-house, but

very close to the river; and there have been interments at a quarter of a mile. I must have seen nearly a hundred graves, but there was no sign of one of them having been disturbed, and no skulls or bones were lying about, nor any vultures near the spot. So the interment is well carried out. But the place chosen is only the next worst to the bank or bed of the river. The ground there is cut up into deep channels, almost like ravines, leading into the river. In the rainy season these must all contain streams draining the land; and it is in the soft beds of these channels that the dead are buried. The *tahsildar* asked me if I would suggest any change in the management of the poor-houses, on which I pointed out all this, and he said he would give orders to have the dead buried in another place. It was unnecessary to tell him about the evil of letting the paupers wander, for he has dozens of them caught and returned every day. The only remedy for that is to make the poor-house secure.

"On returning from the graves, I found all the paupers who could move arranged in rows to receive a treat of *ludhoo*, which the *tahsildar* had provided for them at his own expense, as this day is a Hindoo festival. This sweetmeat is parched rice and maize made into balls with treacle. Some time ago the same officer found means to provide several hundred pairs of drawers for the paupers; for it is always a sign of prolonged want, where the climate is not of the coldest, that the sufferers reach the poor-house in a state nearly nude.

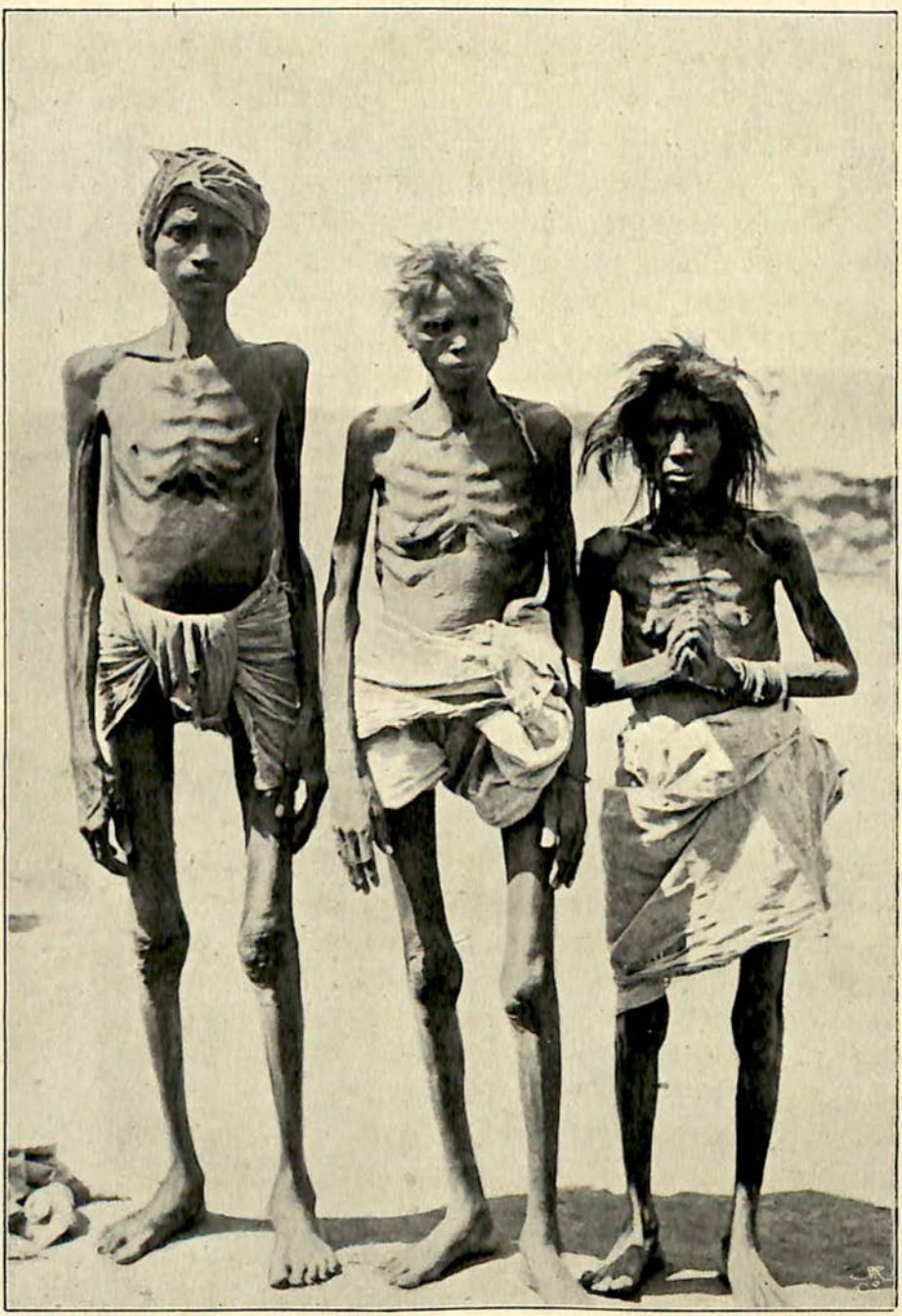
"The registers show only one-fourth of the paupers to belong to this *tehsil;* and half or more of the rest are from native States. The number of starving beggars in the streets is much larger than in Banda. The

bunniahs expose large quantities of grain of several kinds in baskets and on cloths, right on the roads, and the poor starvelings, with Hindoo patience, crawl about picking up single grains that have fallen among the dust, but restraining their hands from making a snatch. I saw one boy run off like the wind—he was not one of the weaklings—with a very small stick of firewood from a bundle which a woman was selling, and she sent alternate yells and wails after him.

"The number of paupers reported at the Katní poor-house this morning was 732; but it seemed to me there were a good many more. When they were seated in lines to receive the *tahsildar's* treat, I felt sure about it, and counted 200, and then no doubt remained that the total number was not less than 1000. The discrepancy is quite intelligible. The roll is called in the morning, after many of the paupers have gone off to the bazaar to beg. When the meal hour arrives they crowd back. This is all simple. But how 1000 are fed with food which was got ready for 700 is not so plain."

My impressions after my visit were that the *ménage* of this poor-house had distinctly improved since the inspection of my friend who wrote the foregoing pages.

The *tahsildar* was there on my arrival, and as my visit was quite a surprise one, it showed that he took an interest in the work of supervision of the people committed to his charge. He was a keen, hard, bitten-looking native, and the poor people welcomed his appearance. The *kala* doctor was there too, a fat, jolly-looking man, and the sufferers' faces lit up as he went his rounds, ministering to the sick and needy. He deplored the death-rate, which was perhaps excessive, as during the three previous days the death-roll was



IN THE NATIVE STATES.

(Rewaris.)

twelve, eleven, and eleven; while six had died that morning. The people who mostly succumbed were the new arrivals, who had so run down in the vital scale that even his most unremitting attention was unable to put new life in them. The enclosure itself had been lately walled in, and a new set of *chuppars* erected round the sides; they were clean and tidy, and the inmates were duly restrained from wandering afield during the day. A squad of sepoys were on guard at the gate, and several *mohurrirs* constantly patrolling the compound. I examined the muster-roll, and found that the number on the day of my visit was 1074. I went into the question of the inrush of paupers from the native State of Rewah; an examination of the books and registers, which by the way were very well kept, showed that out of the entire total of 1074, 635, or rather two-thirds of the present inmates, were Rewaries. This is an additional and unfair burden to be laid upon the shoulders of the already overtaxed Government officials and State resources. It was of course impossible to refuse admittance to these poor creatures craving food and shelter, but a system of drafting off the stronger of the aliens to their own homes in the Central Province Agency had been adopted, and had met with fair success. There can be no doubt that the native States, pursuing the policy which they have aforetime adopted, did not take any very strenuous measures to alleviate the distress of their subjects, and I believe that later this brought out a very strong remonstrance on the part of the supreme Government. I had occasion to verify what was told me about the distress in the native States, and found that the case had been by no means overstated. I may give one instance which will show

what difficulties the Government has to contend with, and what unexpected obstacles at times crop up. The Commissioner of Jubbulpur had sent up an official to Bijorogargh, a place about twenty miles north of Katni, and on the confines of the native State of Rewah. He was furnished with all the proper tools, supplies, and other commissariat stores, and was told to open a relief camp. It had been previously ascertained from local inquiry that one *charge*, as it is technically called, would be sufficient, and arrangements were made for providing for about 5000 souls. Within three days of the establishment of this relief camp and works, a sudden inrush of people from Rewah occurred, and within this period the numbers had gone up to 19,000. The poor officer was at his wits' end, and telegraphed his dilemma to head-quarters. These people had come, many of them, long distances from their homes, and their latter state was really worse than their first. The supplies were rapidly exhausted, and the condition of this starving mass of humanity was truly pitiable. By means of most unheard-of toil and exertion on the part of the head officials, the supplies were brought up, and the people's cravings satisfied. It increased the difficulty that the camp was at some distance from the railway and the means of communication were of the most limited description. Still, all's well that ends well, and very shortly all difficulties were smoothed over. We are all too ready to abuse the powers that be—it is our blessed privilege to grumble—but unless one has been on the spot, one can hardly recognize or appreciate the unexpected difficulties which the officials of India in this late famine have had to combat and surmount. I am sure when I have seen the

toil-worn and brain-weary wheels of the machinery which turn that huge machine, the Indian Empire, I have found it hard to speak a word of dispraise. There are, however, always faulty pieces in such a stupendous, heterogeneous mass of material, and it is only a crisis like the one India has lately passed through that brings the hitherto concealed defects into prominent notice.

My visit to the poor-house was naturally a somewhat hurried one, but I had gained an experience of what to look for and gird at. In fact, before the end of my tour, I was able at once to lay my finger upon the weak spots of the administration, and no doubt raised a scare or two at times in the apprehensive minds of the native officials. *Experientia docet*, and ere I had done with the famine, I had heaps of experience. In the train down to Jubbulpur I fell in with Dr. Ogilvie, who was on one of the relief works on the Sihora road. He told me that his patients were in a very bad way, and that the death-rate had been very excessive, but he hoped to be able to mend the condition of the people, and stop their dying. It was a question of time, but he had the working out of these matters well in hand. When we got into the Nerbudda valley, I fell into the same error that H.E. the Viceroy did, when I saw the smiling crops that met my eye on every side. Lord Elgin had a few weeks previously visited Jubbulpur, and in his reply to the address of the municipality had rather pooh-poohed the notion of famine; and hinted that he had come through a land flowing with milk and honey, and one that ought to gladden the heart of the Jubbulpur and Central Province agriculturist. I must confess that I thought so too, but when I got further afield, and out of the reach of the fertilizing stream of the Nerbudda, I

found that the statement of those who were likely to know the real state of affairs had been in no wise exaggerated. On arrival at Jubbulpur, I put up at Jackson's Hotel, the first time I had been in an hotel since the commencement of my tour. This I mention to show what great hospitality and kindness I had received all through my journey. I found out that Mr. A. Harmsworth was staying there, but was leaving the next morning on a shooting excursion; and so had no opportunity of making myself known to this journalistic prince. True to my Bohemian instincts, I found that there was a company of players at the Railway Institute, and so after my dinner wended my way to the temple of the classic drama. They played a good old Adelphi sort of piece, of the blood-and-thunder description; I think it was called *Ould Oireland*, with of course a sub-title of a patriotic description. The play has not left a very vivid picture on my mind, but I can recollect that the villain was the most villainous villain I have ever seen, and one fully qualified "to play the villains at the Vic." The hero was simply bulging with heroism and manly virtues, and the virtuous heroine, the most virtuous heroine compatible with these *fin de siècle* days. It was midnight ere I could seek the comfort of my bed, which I stood in dire need of.

CHAPTER XV

JUBBULPUR

JUBBULPUR is the head-quarters of a division of Central India. The whole area is some 19,000 square miles, or nearly the size of Belgium and Holland combined. Comparing it with English standards, it is equivalent to that portion of England which lies north of a line drawn from the Wash to the Dee, and bounded on the north by Scotland. In other words, its acreage is equal to the combined counties of Northumberland, Cumberland, Westmoreland, Lancashire, Yorkshire and parts of Cheshire, Derbyshire, Nottingham, and Lincoln. The province of Jubbulpur is subdivided into the following districts—Jubbulpur, Saugor, Damol, Mandla, and Seonee; and each is under the jurisdiction of a Deputy-Commissioner, who is responsible for the administration of his district, subject to the orders of the Chief-Commissioner of Jubbulpur. The population of the whole province is some two millions and a quarter. The sub-district of Jubbulpur is the most densely populated, which, apart from the town-population of over 84,000, contains some 2300 villages. The parts affected by the famine were the whole of the forest district of Mandla, which was very badly distressed two-thirds of Jubbulpur and Damol, and a large

portion of Saugor, while Seonee was in a slightly better condition than its neighbours. The chief staple products of the outlying districts are rice and the smaller millets. In the fertile valley of the Nerbudda wheat is largely grown, but the aboriginal tribes depend upon the former grains, and so were in dire distress. There had been a series of unfavourable seasons, which culminated in the failure of the monsoon, and at the time of my visit, except in rare isolated places, the food-supply on hand was not more than sufficient to supply the demand for another month.

In this province the poor-house system had been in active existence since 1895, but from the enormous area involved, the number of famine houses in existence were not sufficient for the population. In Jubbulpur sub-district there were four famine houses in full blast, in Damol four, in Saugor five, and in Seonee two. Mandla was the thorn in the side of the authorities, owing to the difficulty of communication. I may mention as an instance of this that a relief works had been established in the heart of the forest district, consisting of the opening and making of a road under the supervision and direction of the Public Works Department. The copper money for the payment of the workers had to be carried up from Mandla, and it took an elephant five days to accomplish the single journey, which was through the densest jungle. This involved an almost continuous service of an elephant train for even the supply of cash, to say nothing of the enormous difficulty of keeping up the supplies of food and grain necessary for the workers. That the officials were doing their best to alleviate the distress may be gathered from the subjoined figures; and yet, as Mr.

Julian Hawthorne[1] and myself found after elaborate inquiry, there were thousands of people whom these sources of relief could never and did never reach. It is almost impossible to say what the actual mortality from starvation and its after-effects has been, but even the official returns, when they come to be worked out, will show I fear very startling results, and they cannot and will not embrace an enormous percentage of human beings who have simply sunk down under the stress uncounted and unaccounted for.

On January 23 the official returns of those seeking State aid were—

	In poor-houses.	On P. W. D. relief works.
Jubbulpur	3814	21,000
Saugor	2845	21,000
Damol	1334	7,000
Seonee	480	3,000
Mandla	251	10,000

Besides these, there were doing light work at various relief centres near Jubbulpur, chiefly in the Moorwarra *tahsil*, 39,000; Saugor 10,000, Damol 10,000, Seonee 1600, Mandla 3000. There was a great apprehension amongst the peasants as to the payment of the February *kiss*, or assessment of the land revenue, but Government stepped in and allayed their fears. In Jubbulpur the whole tax was remitted or suspended as occasion and circumstances required. In Damol it had been simply wiped off the slate, while in Mandla two-thirds had been remitted. In Saugor, in the worst parts, it had been totally suspended, and in others better off, partially remitted. In half the district of Seonee it had been totally remitted.

[1] Mr. Julian Hawthorne was the Commissioner appointed by the Government of the U. S. America to report upon the Famine and Plague in India.

I had sent a note to Sir Roper Lethbridge, informing him of my arrival in Jubbulpur, and asking if he could appoint a time for seeing me. I was cramming up the statistics of the district, when a messenger arrived asking me if I could go over to the Residency, where Sir Roper was staying with Mr. Anderson, the Commissioner. I sent for the ubiquitous tonga, and was shortly on my way to my interview with the ex-Press Commissioner. Sir Roper Lethbridge was the last holder of that office, which had been abolished during the reign of Lord Ripon. His duties were to exercise a judicial and judicious control upon the native press, and to supervise generally the fourth estate, as represented by the various native organs of the Indian empire. The trial of Tilak, the editor of the *Kesari*, which at the time of this writing is exciting a great deal of public interest, points to the fact that the unbridled licence of our irresponsible native press is a danger to which India is specially liable, and which requires special measures for its due surveillance and control. The dastardly and cowardly attack on Mr. Rand and Lieut. Ayerst, which not only convulsed Poona, where the outrages occurred, but raised a storm of indignation all over our empire, are said to have been largely instigated by the seditious utterances of the Mahratta native papers. A wave of discontent has for some time past been rolling over the greater part of Hindustan, of which those who are and have been able to read the signs of the times have been frightfully cognizant. This culminated when the plague began to devastate the Bombay Presidency, and famine stalked abroad in the land. I could quote many instances of a feeling of unrest, which has shown itself only too clearly

in the course of events which have during the last few months taken place, and even now are taking place on our northern frontier. This, however, is perhaps somewhat without the province of this work, and yet many, nay almost all, who have an intimate knowledge of the ways and manners of thought of our subjugated millions in the East, have clearly perceived and acknowledged that the spirit of discontent is abroad. It is all very well for the stay-at-home portion of our population to pooh-pooh the idea, but it is my firm conviction, and I am by no means alone in this idea, that the native of India has got it into his head that the *raj* of the paramount power is on the downward grade, and that now is the time for the Crescent to try and assert its supremacy over the Cross, and for all devout Mussulmans to combine to sweep the accursed *Kafirs* off the face of the earth, or at any rate to drive them from the shores of Ind. The articles which appeared in the *Daily Mail*, from the pregnant and prescient pen of Mr. Alfred Harmsworth, so exactly struck the true note that they deserved even more attention than they got. They emanated from a man with a thoughtful and trained faculty of observation, and though written some months before the actual events, yet they very clearly foreshadowed what was likely to happen in the near future in our vast Eastern dependency. Our papers, both daily and weekly, are teeming with articles upon the Unrest in India; and yet in nearly every case a most optimistic view of the whole affair has been entertained. I do not for a moment maintain that there is any very serious danger, since the bundle of sticks, of which India is made up, will never combine into the solid and unbreakable faggot; but there can be

very little doubt that there will be for some days to come, stormy times and scenes in our far-off Eastern possessions. But I have been led into a discussion upon the present situation in the East, which is far beside the matter in hand; let me hie me back to my talk with Sir Roper Lethbridge.

When I arrived at the Residency, I found Sir Roper awaiting my arrival, immersed however in his work; and I waited his pleasure till he had completed the article he was engaged upon, for transmission by the mail to the *Standard*, which same article I read with a great amount of interest some month later in the Club at Lucknow. Sir Roper and myself then plunged into an animated discussion about the famine, its probable area and extent. The ex-Press Commissioner had just come down from Rawal Pindi, and had passed through the greater part of the Punjaub and North-West Provinces. By a careful comparison, we were able to establish that the area affected was certainly the largest of any of the recorded famines of the century, and that the Madras and Orissa famine of '77-78 paled to insignificance before the present scarcity, both in extent of country affected and in severity. On an examination of the map, and in the light of our combined experience, we determined that the famine area would be marked by a line drawn from Guntukul in the Madras Presidency, to Rawal Pindi in the Northern Punjaub. This would pass through the centre of the affected parts, and as the crow flies is some 1400 miles in length; and the famine-belt may be fairly said to extend 200 miles east and west of this dividing line. This does not comprise those parts of Bengal which were suffering, and of which the chief districts are Patna, Benares, and the



JUBBULPUR POORHOUSE.

(Dinner Time.)

native State of Dhurbhanga. With the help of the gained experience of Sir Roper, I was able to definitely settle my further plan of campaign, and we decided that my best route would be through the Bundelkund district, and then on to the Punjaub till I reached Lahore. This would take me through the worst parts of the country, and enable me to visit the large irrigation works which were being carried out on the Ghaggar and Jhelum canals. Mr. Anderson, the Commissioner, then appeared upon the scene, and courteously invited me to join Sir Roper and himself that afternoon on a projected visit of inspection to the Jubbulpur poor-house. True to the appointed time, I turned up again at the Residency and found my friends waiting to start. We drove to the poor-house, which is a permanent institution, and the most solidly built of its kind that I had yet seen. It is an immense courtyard, with *pucca* masonry walls, a space of ground some five acres in extent. In accordance with the usual plan of these places, a series of lean-to *chuppars* (grass huts) had been erected round three sides of the square. I was much struck with the order and cleanliness of the place. The number of inmates on that day was 1787, of whom 681 were immigrants from other provinces and states. The people were being mustered for the evening meal, and so we were able to pass down the lines and thoroughly inspect the whole body of men, women, and children assembled. I made a most rigid inspection all down the lines, and did not come upon more than a dozen cases of real emaciation among that class of people whom one would normally expect to be hale and hearty; from whom I exclude the professional beggars, who trade upon their condition and infirmities. The

few bad cases were all amongst the newly-arrived. Both the superintendent and the *kala* doctor were in attendance, and both these officials seemed to have won the confidence and even the affection of the people under them. There was certainly no fraud here, and even when I wandered away from the *burra sahib logue*, I had no complaints.

The organization is good, there being no fewer than eighty-four *chowkidars* chosen from among the inmates, who each is responsible for his gang. These men are rewarded by getting two extra chuppaties at meal-times, and are allowed the luxury of a fire at night. Following my usual plan, I selected a test case or two and inquired of their history. One man, whose appearance and facial expression struck me, had by a succession of bad seasons been forced on the downward grade. Some five years ago he was a cultivator holding several *bhigas* of land, but this he was obliged to get rid of little by little, and when his patrimony had completely disappeared he was forced to become a mere ploughman and work for others. Misfortunes pursued him relentlessly, and he had lapsed into a common day-labourer. Eventually the final pinch came, and in the previous October he had drifted into the poor-house. This is doubtless the case of many others whom a succession of bad harvests has plunged into the lowest depths of want and misery. The man told his story pathetically, but resignedly, and there was a distinct ring of truth about his simple answers to my cross-examination. I inspected, too, a band of men who were making baskets and string. They were of the Kachli and Lodi castes, and a few of them were *ahirs*.[1] These are the men

[1] Shepherds.

from whom the peasant proprietors of India spring, and are the bone and sinew of the country. They, too, had descended from being landowners to a landless, penniless, homeless condition. We inspected the hospitals, where we found in the chief one (there are two others, segregation ones for small-pox and other infectious diseases) 114 patients, who were nearly all suffering from dysentery. The doctor said that nine-tenths of them were down with the disease. The simple reason is that the new-comers, in spite of the precautions and warnings of the medical staff, will get hold of and devour greedily at their first meal as many chuppaties as they can lay their hands on. Their stomachs, unaccustomed for some time past to such rich and dainty fare, cannot assimilate it, and the result is dysentery and other bowel complaints. Altogether we spent some three hours in the poor-house, and left thoroughly satisfied with the aspect and arrangement of the whole place.

The Commissioner as we were leaving told me that he was going to show Sir Roper the relief works at Mirgang, and asked if I would care to join the party. I gladly accepted his invitation, and arranged to be at the station at 6.30 the following morning.

I devoted the evening to getting up the subject of the aboriginal hill-tribes of Central India, and it may perhaps help my readers to understand the peoples of India, if I condense here the result of my researches. The jungle or forest tracts of Central India have been from time immemorial inhabited by two classes or tribes of people, who are not only distinct in themselves but are very different from the other ordinary race of Hindustan. In the Bombay Presidency around and

about Khandeish we have the Bheels. They are found in the Maratha country and along the Sahyadi mountains north of Junar. They live upon the forest produce, and when they drift into the villages become the village watchmen. They are naturally by profession thieves, and yet when the country became more settled, turned out to be useful auxiliaries to the police. When the country was more disturbed and anarchy prevailed, they used to quit their homes and go on marauding expeditions into the rich and prosperous plains surrounding their forest homes. Like the old Scotch reivers, they dropped across the border and returned to their fastnesses rich with the loot of money and cattle taken from their peaceable neighbours. Their weapons were the bow and arrow, though of later years one finds in their possession ancient matchlocks. In a *shikar* expedition they are excellent; and of great use as trackers, being endued with a sense of sight as keen as an Australian aboriginal bushman or a North-American Indian. They are matchless in woodcraft, and a really tame Bheel is a sportsman of the first water and a real good fellow to boot.

The other and great aboriginal tribe of the Central India Provinces are the Gonds, the various subdivisions of which number, according to the census of 1891, nearly two and a half millions, or over a fifth of the total population. The Gonds a century and a half ago were a very important people, and the Gond kings reigned over the greater part of the Jubbulpur country. In fact the provinces of Central India still in the vernacular bear the name of Gondwarra. This race have left marks of their former greatness in the names of five great forts which marked the head-quarters of their



GONDS ON THE MOVE.

various rajahs when at the zenith of their power. Their rule ended when the Mahrattaś overran Central India in 1784, but they had before this been declining. With the arrival of British rule these people sank lower and lower. In the old days they had the free and sole use of the forests, and they were able to get a scanty livelihood by gathering for sale for the purposes of distillation the fruit of the *mhowá* tree, and by sowing in the forest clearings small patches of the lesser millets. Large tracts of country in the Damol and Seonee districts, which were once almost exclusively inhabited by this tribe, are now depopulated. Many have wandered off to other parts, a very large proportion have died, and thousands have migrated to the tea plantations of Assam. The present famine has pressed upon no race or tribe more hardly than these frugal and hardy forest tribes; those in the Mandla, Seonee and Balaghat districts have been the greatest sufferers. Mr. Goodridge, who has lately retired from the Indian Civil Service, and whose knowledge and experience of the native population of Central India cannot be surpassed, thus wrote in the *Indian Agriculturist* with reference to the Gonds and their ills—

"A high official in the Central Provinces, who recently passed through these districts, told me that he had found nothing but depopulated villages and a few wandering skeletons on the road. They were once largely employed in what are called 'forest villages.' They undertook the work of the Forest Department generally, and were in return permitted to live in the forests and to cultivate portions of land on easy terms. Many of these forest villages have now almost entirely disappeared. Always reduced to the lowest condition compatible with existence, they are without reserves of

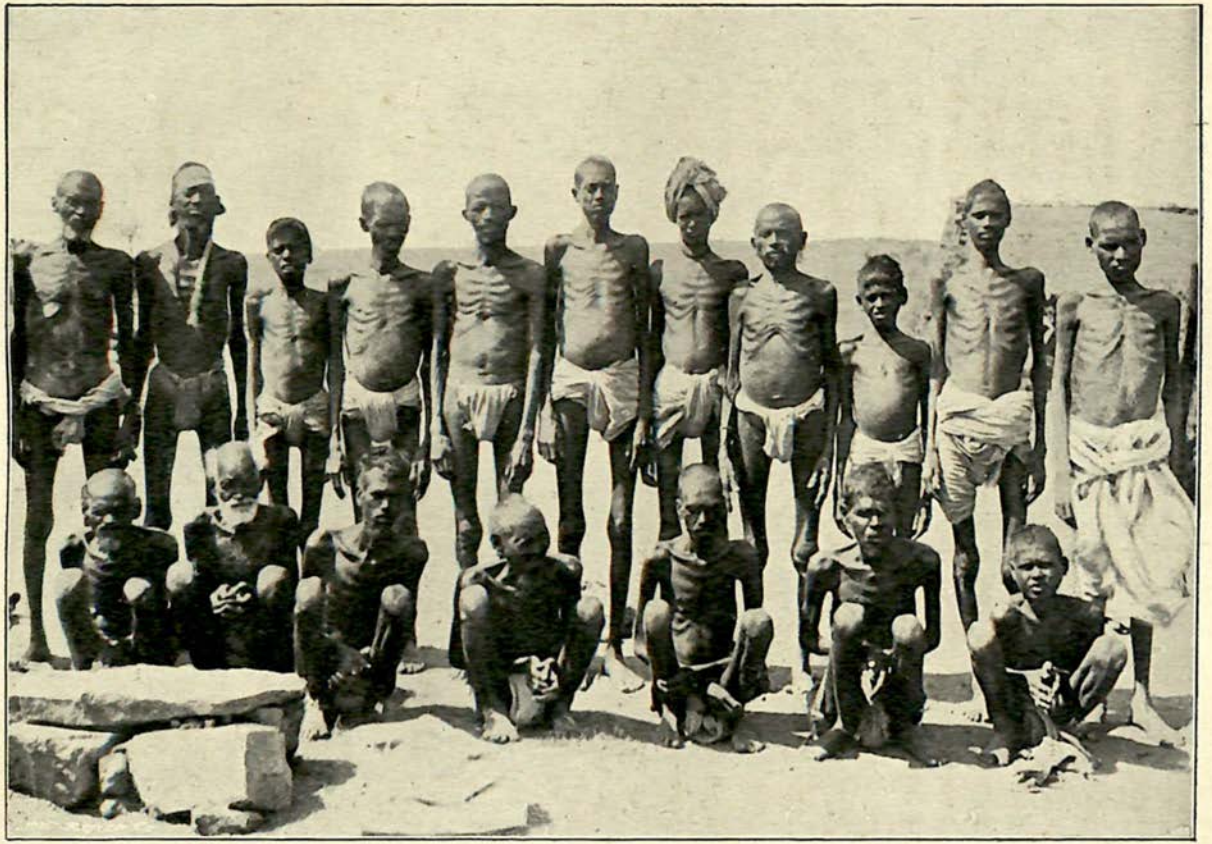
any kind; the successive failures of the crops on which they depend have left the Gonds destitute."

Mr. Mahony, the missionary of Mandla, who by his work and exertions on behalf of these poor people has made a niche for himself in the temple of Fame, thus writes about them—

"The Gonds will not rise or riot, but they will die in silence; of this I feel confident, and many of them I have seen die already."

I quote again from Mr. Goodridge, who certainly knows what he is writing about, and who puts the matter very succinctly and very properly before the reading and thinking public. He says—

"On a recent occasion, when the Chief-Commissioner asked a forest officer what could be done for those forest villages, he received the reply, 'Nothing, as there were no longer any forest villages in existence; the inhabitants having left the forests.' The spring crops of 1894 failed, owing to an excess of moisture, and both spring and autumn crops perished during '95 and '96 from drought. At the beginning of '96 want of food first began to be severely felt by the Gonds. In October, when the autumn crops on the ground also failed, and especially the grains on which they live, there being no food or employment available, a widespread migration set in towards Nagpur and Jubbulpur. Numbers perished on the roads in search of employment and food, and a still larger number dispersed themselves in the jungles, where they had gone in search of wild fruits and roots, but only to find the forest produce had also suffered from drought. As soon as this aimless wandering had set in, the great majority were hopelessly lost, and not a fourth of them will ever return to their homes.



GONDS.

It is impossible to get any approximate idea of the mortality which has followed this migration from the hills, for many perished in the jungles and by the road-sides, and were devoured by jackals and vultures. Several Gond villages were left without a *kotwal* (village watchman) to report deaths, but some idea may be formed of the mortality amongst those who were too feeble to leave their villages, and whose deaths were reported by the village *kotwal* when he had not joined the exodus. In one district alone the number of deaths recorded for the month of December 1896 was 2894, while in the corresponding month of the following year it was 3904, that is, the death-rate has been steadily rising till it was trebled in two years, and this too, it must be remembered, took place among the population which was being steadily thinned.

"A large proportion of the Gond villages have been totally or partly deserted, and it is improbable that they will be taken up again for years, if ever, by the Gonds."

This is a truthful picture drawn on the spot by one who is thoroughly conversant with the people and the district, and shows clearly the state to which a failure of the crops will reduce a population already, even in the piping times of peace, hovering on the brink of starvation. It is absolutely futile to give people of this description money for the purchase of seed-grain, as they will only spend it in other ways. Seed-grain must be found, or else the horrors will be indefinitely prolonged. An enormous difficulty always arises in any distribution of funds, and that is the system of *dustoorie* and peculation which runs through the whole gamut of the social native scale, and which is looked upon as natural and in due order by the highest and lowest in the land.

The idea of commission is deeply imbued in the oriental, and it is a feature which no amount of watchfulness on the part of the European can ever eradicate. From the prince to the pauper, *san*[1] is a word to conjure with, and all alike are ready to profit by the custom. The Mansion House Fund could not be better employed than in enabling the starving millions of India to garner in another harvest, and, should the gods permit, save their lives; but the great problem for the Government to solve is—How shall this stream of gold reach the fields for which it is intended, without, in its course, being diverted into innumerable side-channels? England has found the money, and she may properly say, "See ye to that."

[1] *San*, a toll or tithe or commission given in every transaction.

CHAPTER XVI

MIRGANG

THE party assembled at the station for the visit to the works at Mirgang consisted of Mr. Anderson (the Commissioner), Mr. Leaventhorpe (the Executive Engineer), Sir Roper Lethbridge and myself. On arrival at our destination, some seven miles down the line, in the direction of Nursingpur, we found that the Commissioner had thoughtfully arranged for a carriage to be sent forward, and in this we drove to the Sihora-Nursingpur road, where the works were established. This is the main road from the north to the south of India. This district and road acquired in the past an unenviable reputation, by being the scene of the labours of that extraordinary band of murderers called "Thugs," who overran this part of India, and numbered their victims by hundreds. In the old days no travellers were safe, and the order of the *roomal* (handkerchief) was bestowed by these assassins, with the utmost impartiality, on both rich and poor. No one seemed to be too insignificant, and even the poorest wayfarers were ruthlessly done to death for the sake of the paltry blanket which stood between them and a state of nature. The *topes* in the neighbourhood are supposed to contain the graves of countless victims of this organized system of highway robbery and murder.

Sleeman made an ever-enduring name for himself when, by his efforts, he was able to break up and dissolve this association of assassins, and his name has been perpetuated in the town of Sleemanabad, which is some twelve miles north of Jubbulpur. It is ancient history now, how by a system of paid informers he was able to crush this society, and how he housed and protected the people who had served his purpose, by affording information, in what was termed the Art School of Jubbulpur. Here all connected with the proceedings were carefully looked after and protected from the machinations of the Thugs. The original inmates have ere this disappeared, and the building has been turned into a Reformatory for boys; but there are still a few remnants of the Thugs to be found in the bazaar of the city.

This road leads to the Deccan and the plains of Guzerat, which tradition has handed down to be a veritable land of Goshen for the peoples of Central and Northern India.

The part of the road we visited was in the immediate neighbourhood of the Nerbudda, and close to one of the sights of Jubbulpur, namely, the "Marble Rocks." We were however on business, not on pleasure bent, and though I should dearly have liked to have seen these curious phenomena, yet the call of duty prevented our making the diversion. These relief works were in the hands of the Public Works Department, and the persons employed upon them were all more or less capable of doing a day's work for a day's wage. They were the show works of the district, and the Commissioner and Engineer were justly proud of being able to dilate upon their excellency and general organization. They were by no means a fair criterion of the condition of the

people, as one had to get further afield and see the village relief works to grasp the depths to which the people had sunk. They showed, however, that the Government was taking a paternal interest in its subjects, and giving them an opportunity of obtaining the means of subsistence.

This road when done would be of actual service to the country, as it was one of the few I saw, except in the Bombay Presidency, where the Executive intended to metal it properly, and was not merely a makeshift to provide work which the first monsoon would convert into an impossible and impassable quagmire. With this object in view, a separate camp had been formed some four miles up the road in the direction of Jubbulpur. There was a large stone-quarry, and some five or six thousand people were busily employed in digging stone and breaking up the metal.

There were on the whole series of works, three grades of workers; and they received a corresponding wage according to the task set them to do. In the A class were the stone-diggers and breakers, who received the full A wage. In the B class were put the road-makers and diggers, who, taking soil from borrow-pits at the side of the road, had to raise its level some three feet above the adjacent fields. The last class of all were those who were too weak to do a proper day's hard work. These latter were provided with baskets, and sent off in gangs of fifty to collect *kunker*[1] from the bed of the Nerbudda, some mile and a half away. This was an easy and excellent method of keeping a large mass of people employed who would only have been a hindrance to the proper workers.

[1] Limestone.

I must mention here a circumstance that occurred two days after our visit, at these very works, with reference to this latter class of *kunker*-collectors. It will tend to show what difficulties the authorities have to contend with in the case of an unreasonable and unreasoning people. I may premise my statement by saying that the harvest, such as it was, was at hand, and the people were beginning to draft off to their homes. The case as related to me by the Engineer on the day of its occurrence was as follows—When the class C came to be paid, they strongly objected to the fact that they received less *pies* than the others, and wished to be paid at the same rate as the other strong and capable workers. It was pointed out to them that they were at full liberty to go into any higher class if they proved themselves able to do the work. No, this did not suit their book, and they wanted to keep on at the old task, but have the full pay. Argument, persuasion, everything was useless, and the final result was that 1700 of them struck work and took themselves off. I quote this in refutation of the remarks often made that the Public Works Department were carrying matters with a high hand, and trying to sweat the people for the good and ultimate glorification of the department. I think that what I have written above will show that even with India's starving millions, the post of those responsible is not altogether a bed of roses.

Sir Roper had just got a new *kodak*, and we mustered several gangs of workers for the purpose of perpetuating their portraits: he took quite a nice series, and we looked forward with a pleasurable anticipation to having these mementoes of our day at Mirgang. Alas and alack! when the films came to be developed

it was found that they were too old, that Sir Roper had been badly "spoofed," and the would-be pictures were an indistinguishable and unreproducible blurr.

When we had got about two miles down the road on our own flat feet, as the road was impassable for a carriage, we arrived at a coolie settlement. There were the usual huts and office for the gang *mohurrir*, etc. When a fresh gang of workers is formed they are given all materials to build huts, and two days' wages are also given. They make their own shelters out of the materials furnished. This plan has been found to work well, and less expensively than the putting up of huts by the authorities, and the people prefer to be their own architects and builders.

One of the chief growls of the Engineer was that the people do not do a task anything like in proportion to the wage given, and even if they are put upon the penal rate of wage no good purpose is served; it only gives a handle for the men of Belial to rejoice, scoff and gibe at the Government. With the present provisions of the Famine Code, which sets its face steadily against piece-work and the petty contract system, the hands of the officials are tied, and they have to grin and bear the insufficiency of the out-turn.

The petty contract system is thoroughly understood and appreciated throughout the whole of India. It is the usual and ordinary way in which all irrigation, railway and other works are done, and it seems to be a case of monumental red-tapeism to taboo it in the case of the famine relief works. It will of course be argued that this system lays itself open to the chances of *zoolum*, *zubberdustie* and *dustoorie*. That I will allow; but on the other hand, have the powers been able to repress these

very things on the relief works, and is it not the cry all over India that the petty native officials on all sides have feathered their nests at the expense of the labourers? The Executive have only gone half-way in the matter, and if they had gone a step or two further they would have solved the difficulty. As it is, every gang of workers is allowed to elect its own mate, and these gangs are usually arranged by the inhabitants of the same or neighbouring villages working together. In several gangs I saw, the ganger was a mere lad of some fourteen or fifteen summers, and on inquiry found that he was the son or relation of the head-man of the village, and by divine right, I suppose, assumed the temporary headship of the clan. If the ganger was allowed to take up a certain piece of work, for which he would receive the price agreed upon, he could sub-let it to his fellow-gangsmen. It would be to their interest to get the work done quickly, and being fifty to one, you may be sure that they would not allow their ganger to rob them with impunity; unless they looked upon it with toleration, on the ground that the proceeds would still remain in the family. Seeing that the gang elect their own gangers, they would look to their own interest in the matter. What the natives do object to, is filling the pockets of the native subordinate officials at the expense of their own. I have no doubt that the cashiers and the other native authorities were fleecing these workers, as we were continually met with the cry—"*Panch pies bas nai hai, sahib*" ("Five pice is not enough, sahib"), whenever we approached.

I found from experience that where this cry was general, a very extensive system of peculation on the part of the subordinate officials was going on. If, however,

the tasks were let out on the petty contract system, a greater out-turn of work would be the result, and the cost of supervision, and the wonderful series of peculative under-strappers would be abolished. In the Punjaub and in the North-West, the code has been considerably modified on these lines, but the Central Provinces are still tied and bound by red-tapeism. This fetters the hands of the higher powers, and in many cases quadruples their work.

The road is patrolled by a series of police, and one sepoy that we met reported that in the course of his beat he had come across a man dying, and was about to seek help to have him looked after, and, if possible, removed to the huts where we were.

While we were discussing this, and the Commissioner was giving the necessary orders, a fat and sleek Brahmin came up and began to complain of his pay. His condition showed that his corn did him good, and we then and there christened him "The Friar of Orders Grey." Both the officials listened gravely, and then, drawing aside his jacket, we examined his ribs. He was well-nurtured, and even if he did not get his five *pies*, was well able to look after himself. He was in the pink of condition, and a sleek and plausible scoundrel.

The wages here are paid every other day, and a firm of *sowcars*, or native bankers, of Jubbulpur had contracted to find the needful. It required about 450 rupees' worth of copper money daily to meet the pay-sheet. These men, the *sowcars*, were also allowed to act as *bannias* to the camps and open grain-shops. It was thought that in this way the money paid on the one hand would return to the *bannias* on the other. It is a curious thing, however—and the officials were not able

to account for it—that only some 200 rupees' worth of the money daily returned to the shops. A portion of the deficit might be spent in the neighbouring villages, say 100 rupees; this left, however, daily 150 rupees to be accounted for. Could it be possible that these workers were able to save this amount daily from their Famine Code wage? or did this sum find its way into the pockets of the subordinate officials, who naturally would not be lavish with their money on the very scene of their dishonest operations? This was a crux which was sadly bothering the officers, and which to the best of my belief remains, even to the present day, unsolved.

When we had finished the road, we went on to Kurambul, where were established the stone and metal breaking works. There were, on the day of our visit, 5387 engaged in this camp. They looked well and happy; but it must be remembered that they were the pick of the people. They are divided into gangs of 100, and each *mohurrir* is the proud bearer of a red Turkey twill flag and a red and white belt, with the number of his gang blazoned in white letters upon both banner and belt.

We caused a muster to be made; and it was a gay scene to see the bannerets gaily waving, and the people collecting under their various standards. The women of Central India wear much brighter colours than the ladies of the Bombay Presidency, and the bright reds and yellows of their *saris* gave a colouring to the picture which enhanced its effect.

I must relate the following anecdote which actually occurred at Kurambul some few days before our visit, and which is certainly *ben trovato.* It is another side of the shield, and shows up the famine question



A BHEEL WOMAN.

in a different and perhaps humorous light. I have previously mentioned that women who have lately done their duty to their husbands and the State, in the reproduction of the species, are treated with special leniency, and every provision made for their condition and infirmity. In other words, nursing mothers are looked upon as a genus apart, and are put up into the A class, and receive wages and diet in accordance with that scale. Lately a woman arrived who wished to be taken on to the works. She came up to the official cuddling in her *sari* what was supposed to be her last addition to the census. She demanded to be taken upon the roll as a woman who had recently done her duty to humanity. She was ordered to sit down and wait her turn, when her needs and requirements would be duly attended to. The only rift within the lute was that her infant began to howl. The man in charge, evidently a family man himself, did not seem to recognize the familiar cry of an infant, hungry and in distress. He approached the lady, and gently pushing aside her *sari*, in which the babe lay wrapped, exposed to view a *nice fat little puppy dog*, which was yelping at the top of its little shrill voice. The lady then perceived that the game was up, and "vamosed the ranch," pursued by the derisive laughter of the onlookers. This will show that for tricks that are vain, and for ways that are dark, the heathen Chinee cannot give many points to his dusky sister of Hindustan.

We had finished our task, and, beguiling our long drive into Jubbulpur, we arrived in the afternoon, and were able to throw off our harness and take a well-earned tub and *siesta*.

Mr. Julian Hawthorne, the Special Commissioner

sent in the interests of the American Government to inquire into the famine and plague in India, made a most careful and extended tour through the Central Provinces, and other parts of the famine districts of India. He was able to devote much more time to his mission than I, in view of my rapid and extended tour through the length and breadth of the land, could compass. Since his return to the States, he has contributed a series of pregnant articles upon the subject, and being a man with the trained faculty of observation very largely developed, his statements may be accepted as the plain and unvarnished facts of the case, as seen by himself *in propria personâ*. He has given, in the August number of the *Cosmopolitan*, such an excellent and graphic description of his visit to an orphanage, in which he so exactly reproduces what I too have seen, that I have taken, with his permission, the liberty of quoting his account *in extenso*—

"We first entered an orphanage, being met at the gate by a native supervisor, a shrewd and hard-looking oriental of sixty. There were hundreds of children, mostly under ten, sitting or standing about the large enclosure. They had lost their parents either by death or starvation—for at a certain stage of starvation the parental instinct disappears, and fathers and mothers abandon their offspring with a terrible apathy.

"Indian children are normally active, intelligent and comely, with brilliant eyes like jewels. A few of these little creatures, who had been taken in before starvation had gone too far, looked fairly well; but the majority? Death had walked among them, and would sooner or later carry them away. You could count the ribs in the least emaciated of them; but there were scores

of figures there upon which I could scarcely endure to look. Starvation kills Indians very slowly; the present famine had been preceded by years of 'scarcity'—which would be starvation in white men's countries—and the bodies of the victims had been reduced gradually, but still life lingered, if that can be called life which enabled them to draw breath, and move feebly the bones that were their legs and arms. The fat of their bodies had first been consumed, then the flesh, leaving only gristle and sinew. Finally (what I should not have supposed possible) these also were attacked; there are left the shrunken veins, the nerves, which now but imperfectly transmit the impulses from the brain, which is itself anæmic and scarcely human; the wasted internal organs, and the skin, which is shrivelled, cold, and dry to the touch. The abdomen, especially in children, is often largely distended, and tight as a drum, as if overloaded with food; and I have heard persons, looking at photographs of such, remark that these, at any rate, must have had a hearty meal. But it is not food, but the lack of it, which causes this distension; there is disease of the liver, which becomes enormously swollen, and wind. A child who reaches this condition hardly ever survives. The contrast between this abnormal rotundity and the emaciation of the limbs, chest and back is grotesque and horrible. I can compare these little creatures to nothing so well as to beetles; their legs and arms are like the legs of insects, and their movements slow. The utter disappearance of the gluteal muscles (buttocks) gives a repulsive aspect to the figure, and quite alters the pose and gait. Indeed the walk, while walking is still possible, resembles nothing properly called by that name; it is a kind of totter,

there being no power to rise on the ball of the foot, or to lift the thigh. The arms swing lifeless by the sides, or are lifted with difficulty. As for the faces of these children, nothing child-like remains of them. The dark skin is stretched on a fleshless skull; the lips are mere skin, and shrink back from the teeth; the eyes glimmer dimly in hollow sockets, unless, as is often the case, they have been eaten away by the ophthalmia which is among the consequences of starvation. The neck is hardly larger in circumference than the spinal column, and insecurely supports the skull. The scalp is frequently attacked by a disease which completely covers it with a kind of thick, hard, whitish scab—a skull-cap of death. The inside of the mouth is also subject to ulcerous swellings, hard and painful, which force it open, prevent the swallowing of food, and discharge a viscid matter. The bones of the legs are often raw with ulcers, on which swarms of flies settle and feed. Creatures thus reduced are not seldom fed by the native supervisors on insufficiently cooked or even raw grain—the result is diarrhœa, dysentery and cholera, of which every camp of this kind contains many cases. Well, this is starvation.

"One of the first objects I noticed on entering was a child of five, standing by itself near the middle of the enclosure. Its arms were not so large round as my thumb; its legs were scarcely larger; the pelvic bones were plainly shown; the ribs, back and front, started through the skin, like a wire cage. The eyes were fixed and unobservant; the expression of the little skull-face solemn, dreary and old. Will, impulse, and almost sensation, were destroyed in this tiny skeleton, which might have been a plump and happy baby. It seemed

not to hear when addressed. I lifted it between my thumbs and fore-fingers; it did not weigh more than seven or eight pounds. Probably its earliest recollections were of hunger, and it could never have had a full meal. It was now deserted by those who had brought it into the world, or they were dead; its own life would be gone in a day or two. Its skin was quite cold, dry and rough. Pain had been its only experience from the first; it had never known or imagined the comforts that babies have. I thought of my own children when they were this age. Hindoos love their children, perhaps as much as we do. Hunger and hopelessness have brought them to a state where they will eat the food that might keep their children alive, and, when that is gone, abandon them. We can comprehend what this means of suffering, only by supposing ourselves doing the same thing. Ask your wife whether she can conceive of any circumstances that would induce her to abandon her precious baby. She cannot reply for indignation. But after a year or two's starvation, she would no longer be the tender, sensitive mother you know her to be now; she would slowly have turned into a callous, dull, desperate animal. She would force from her baby's little hand the grain of corn which it had picked up in the dust of the road, and put it into her own mouth with a snarl. She would get up from the shadow of the rock under which she had been resting, leaving her baby there for the birds and jackals to make merry over, and stagger away, without remorse. When suffering has extirpated the maternal instinct, the last word has been said.

"We went towards the sheds, where were those who were too enfeebled to stand or walk. A boy was squat-

ting over an earthen saucer, into which he spat continually; he had the mouth disease; he could not articulate, but an exhausted moan came from him ever and anon. There was a great abscess on the back of his head. Another, in the final stage of dysentery, lay nearly dead in his own filth; he breathed, but had not strength to moan. There was one baby which seemed much better than the rest; it was tended by its own mother. Being only half an orphan, it did not rightly belong there; but for some reason it had been admitted. Now, this child was in no better condition than the rest of them when it came, but its mother's care had revived it. That meant simply that it received its full allowance of the food which is supposed to be given to all alike. Why had the others—the full orphans—not received theirs? Because, the native overseers had withheld it from them. There was no mother to protect them; and what is a child's life in comparison with a few *paise'* (farthings) worth of grain? After all, there was hardly a chance that even this child would live. A few days later in Allahabad, I saw a number of children who had been rescued by the missionary there before starvation got full hold on them; everything that tender care and judicious feeding could do to restore them had been done; they had never in their lives had treatment anything like so watchful and wise. But out of a hundred of these children, twenty had died in spite of all that could be done; and though the rest now seemed hearty and lively, their little bodies well filled-out with flesh, yet they were not safe; they were only reprieved. In a year or two, or three years, most of them will surely die; there is no strength in them to resist disease—no recuperative power. The scar of the blow which famine

had dealt them was gone; but it had been fatal none the less.

"While we were walking about, those of the children who were able to keep their feet, followed us round, and when we came to a stand would collect about us, staring at us with dull looks, and often dropping on their knees and elbows at our feet, and putting their claw-like little hands on our boots. It gave me a shudder; it was like insects crawling at us. They knew not what to ask for, but vaguely recognized in us a power which it was expedient to propitiate. There was nothing to be done. The supervisors would promise everything, but we knew that as soon as our backs were turned, the robbery would continue just as before—and the murder which robbery of the starving involves."

CHAPTER XVII

BANDA AND BUNDELKUND

THAT same evening I was dining with Mr. Anderson the Commissioner, and while there a telegram came in announcing that a most regrettable catastrophe had occurred at Khurai in the Saugor district. The poor-house, which consisted of the usual grass-thatched sheds, was burnt down, and twenty-four of the inmates lost their lives. The next day an inquiry on the spot was opened by the Assistant-Commissioner, who had hurried down to Khurai on hearing of the disaster. The inquiry revealed that the fire had originated in the middle of the shed on the eastern side of the square. One of the paupers had lighted a few sticks to warm himself, and a spark caught the thatch. A strong east wind was blowing, and the fire once started spread with such rapidity that the whole place was burnt to the ground within half-an-hour. The panic-stricken inmates bolted *en masse* for the one gateway. This exit was twenty-four feet wide, and had the paupers exercised any self-control, there was nothing to prevent the safe egress of the whole number. A wild rush was made, and the weaker in the stampede were trampled under-foot. This was proved by the fact, that out of the total number of twenty-four victims, no less than twenty-two were found within a distance of fifteen feet of the gate-

way. The remaining two bodies found were those of children, which were in the corner of the shed, and it was supposed that they were suffocated in their sleep. The disaster was so sudden that no assistance of any kind could be rendered. The whole thing was due to an accident caused by the infringement of the rules by one of the pauper inmates. I am indebted for the above details to the official report of the disaster, which was later forwarded to the authorities and afterwards put into the hands of the press.

I was very anxious to make an excursion into the outlying district of Mandla, and for that purpose sent for the *tonga-wallah*. He rejoiced in the name of Kamta Praseh, and was a grand and patriarchal-looking old man, with an enormous white beard which flowed down to his waist. We discussed the question, but as I found that the round trip, as our American cousins say, would consume five valuable days, I gave up the project, and determined to hasten on to Banda in the Bundelkund district, which dovetails into the Central Provinces, but is within the jurisdiction of the Lieutenant-Governor of the North-West Provinces. I had been informed that this was the blackest spot of the North-West, and that my information was correct may be gathered from the following remarks made by Sir Anthony Macdonald at the Civil Service dinner held at Lucknow.

Speaking of the famine in the North-West, and of the tract of country called Bundelkund, and the adjoining portion of the Allahabad district, he said—"Of these parts it is unquestionably true that they have not known such a scarcity as the present for the last hundred years. The people there have suffered from

an accumulation of misfortunes that is only paralleled at the present moment by the plight of Saugor and Jubbulpur. After a succession of bad seasons, culminating in a famine during last spring and autumn, they obtained no more than a five- or six-anna crop from the autumn harvest, and now the prospects of the *rabi*, from fair to good elsewhere, are equally poor. It is not improbable, therefore, that by May in the worst parts—namely, Banda, Hamarpur, Jalaun, and South Allahabad—half the population may be upon the hands of Government. A famine of this severity earlier in the century would have meant for a certainty that half the population would have died outright. Probably a great many more, for supplies from outside could not possibly have reached such a land-locked country."

He then went on to talk about the agitation which had been raised about the spending of the fund reserved by the Indian Government to meet the exigencies of famine, and which had been expended from time to time in the formation and extension of the Indian Railway system.

"One wonders, by the way, what those who talk of the misappropriation of the Famine Fund, and seem to think that that money ought to be kept in a bag by itself until famine comes, have got to say about the Indian Midland Railway. Possibly they would fall back upon the argument that railways do as much harm as good, inasmuch as though it cannot be denied that they bring food to places where it is scarce, they make it dear in others where it would otherwise be abundant."

The editor of the *Pioneer*, from which this speech is taken, closes the report with the following trenchant

remark—"It is a pity that the sleek Babu essayists, who present these views to the world, could not be put to spend a week in an isolated famine district in the olden time, where they might feed on the reflection that one man's hunger may after all only mean another's satiety."

I left Jubbulpur at 9 a.m. the next day, and hoped to arrive at Banda by midnight. On my arrival at Katni Junction, I had some time to wait for the arrival of the East Indian train which connected with ours on the G. I. P. The station-master welcomed me as an old friend, and told me that that morning he had received the first consignment of Burmah rice from Calcutta, and that he had five wagons in the yard awaiting unloading. He added that the *bannias* had arranged to sell it in the bazaar at the rate of ten seers to the rupee.

At Katni a Kentish man who came from my neighbourhood joined the train, and got into my carriage. He has four sons in the Indian Civil Service, and was over from home paying them each a visit in turn. He had just come up from Bilaspur, where he had heard of my visit, and said that the authorities there, since my representations, were beginning to stir their stumps in the matter of looking better after the poor.

When we got out of the fertile valley of the Nerbudda, the aspect of the country changed for the worse, and its general appearance reminded me of the dry and sterile tract of country between Dharwar and Bijapur. There was the same absence of all signs of recent cultivation, and the general outlook was of a most forbidding and gloomy nature. At every station where the train stopped, it was immediately surrounded by swarms of emaciated and clamorous natives, who, pointing to their

wasted limbs and mere effigies of bodies, begged in piteous accents for *pies*. I had heard that this would be the case, and so had told my servant to provide a bag of copper coin. With these *denarii* I was able, at any rate, to put a morsel of bread into the stomachs of some of the hundreds who asked for alms, but the crowds were so great that my store was soon exhausted, and my heart bled for those poor sufferers whose hard lot it was beyond my meagre powers to alleviate. The deeper we got into the Central Province Agency, the more pronounced became the numbers of the suppliants, and the more abject the component parts of that great seething and starving mass of humanity. At Badanpur, where the crowd was very great, I questioned the station-master as to whether any official means were being taken to mitigate the distress. He told me that the Political Agent had just issued orders to the various *jehagidars* under his control to expend money on relief works, and that the nearest chief to his station (I forget the name of the *jehagidar*) had allowed a sum of 10,000 rupees to be set aside for this purpose. But when thousands of his subjects were starving, this sum would soon be swallowed up.

The misery and distress seemed to culminate at Maghawan, where they find a rich yellow ochre. This is exported to Calcutta, and after due preparation, forms the dye which lends its rich orange colour to the saffron-hued shawls so beloved of the Bengali Babu. The officials here told me that the distress was awful, and that the poor people had no means of subsistence except the precarious charity which they could extract from the travellers of each passing train. They were from the native States, and the poor wayfarers were thrust out

from village to village, the inhabitants having no food for themselves, much less for the stream of immigrants. They wandered on, till the final stage came and they sank down to die alone, a prey to jackals and vultures. That very morning the station-master said five corpses had been found on the line, between this station and the next, of poor wayfarers who had fallen by the way. The native rajahs here were doing absolutely nothing to help or alleviate these people, but, in accordance with the old time-worn policy of inaction, were allowing them to starve or drift, or both.

About eight o'clock in the evening I arrived at Manikpur Junction, where I was able to snatch a hasty meal before changing into the Indian Midland Railway, which was to take me to Banda. I made inquiries here, and found that the dawk bungalow at Banda was at some distance from the station, so wired to the station-master to reserve the waiting-room for me. On the Indian railways there are waiting-rooms which *bonâ fide* passengers can use if necessary. They are furnished with beds, but of course no bedding, and have a bath-room attached. At out-of-the-way stations I found these resting-places convenient on more than one occasion. On arrival at Banda at 1 a.m., you can imagine my disgust when I found that the waiting-room was already occupied by a couple of snoring natives, and that there was no room for me. While I was storming about the station, speiring where I could lay my head for the remainder of the night, a magnificent specimen of a Mussulman, over six feet high, and with a beard of enormous dimensions, respectfully approached and asked, "Is sahib wanting dawk bungalow?" "Yes," I replied, "but I hear it is some two miles from here, and

there are no gharries." "No, your honour, the bungalow is just there across the station-yard." So after all I had been misinformed, and found my night's lodging was to hand. I ordered my kit to be taken across, and was very thankful to find that the difficulty of accommodation was so easily solved. Another European had alighted at the station, and he soon turned up at the rest-house. We chummed in, and I found on inquiry that he was a Major Pond, who had been sent down by the authorities from Allahabad, to take charge of the famine and relief works in the Banda district. The room allotted to me was the largest in the place; it was about fifty feet long by twenty feet wide, and was evidently used as a *durbarkhana*[1] by the *burra sahibs* visiting the place. Our other neighbour was a Bengali Babu, a barrister who had come down to defend a native who had been accused of murdering his wife. The trial had concluded that very day, and the murderer had been condemned to suffer the extreme penalty of the law.

Banda is one of the most God-forsaken places it was ever my luck to strike. There were no tongas or vehicles of any kind, except the native *ekka*, which is one of the most uncomfortable vehicles to ride in I have ever tried. The country is poor and sterile to a degree, and one remarkable feature is the lowness of the water-level all over the country. I measured the depth of a couple of wells, and found that one was over a hundred feet, while the other was about seventy. In India, as a rule, the water-level is a very little way below the surface, but here I found that the average was over sixty feet. This makes well-irrigation an impossibility,

[1] Hall of Audience.

and the district has to depend entirely upon the clouds for its water for crop-cultivation.

The first thing in the morning I called upon the head clerk of the District Survey-office, and from him acquired the following details anent the Bundelkund district.

The area of Banda is 3061 square miles, with a population of 705,000. The city population itself is 60,000, but during the famine the numbers had greatly decreased, owing to large numbers of the people having deserted their homes and gone upon the relief works.

The total number of those getting Government aid at the time of my visit were—

Active workers on relief works	125,000
Dependents	28,090
Number in poor-houses	6,000
Number receiving gratuitous relief ...	10,000
Total	169,000

The worst sub-district was Mau, and here the proportion of paupers to the population figured out at forty-five per cent.

The works consisted of road-making, and there were three sections being made, which would connect the three principal towns of the district.

From the survey-office, where I was able to inspect the district maps and get a fair grasp of the system of relief, I went on to the treasury, where I found the *Stunt Sahib*, as the Deputy-Collector is called, hard at work with his staff counting out thousands of *pies* for the payment of the workers. In the course of a conversation he informed me that the first works had been opened in February 1896. There had been scarcity for the last three years, and this year ('97) both *kharif* and *rabi*

crops had failed. The district was purely agricultural, and the chief products were wheat, grain, and cotton. The *bannias* had begun importing Burmah rice, and also large consignments of potatoes had been received from Cawnpur and Allahabad. Very large *takavi* advances had been made, and the *kiss* (land revenue) for the year had been remitted. The deputy feared that the pressure would increase, and before and during the rains he fully expected that more than half the entire population would be under State protection. There were already seven poor-houses in the district open, and it was contemplated opening more, as the present ones were full to their utmost capacity. An orphanage had been established in the city for those children whose parents had either died or deserted their offspring. This orphanage, which I afterwards visited, was established in an old and disused *serai*, and was just as full as it could hold of parentless bairns. They are admitted at any age up to fifteen, and there were on the muster-roll over 400 on the occasion of my visit. This will give some idea of the mortality which had taken place, and was still going on, as these numbers were confined to children found deserted or neglected in the city itself and its immediate neighbourhood. As is so often the case amongst the young of India, ophthalmia was very prevalent, and also ringworm. There were also many instances of "famine scab." This is a white sore, which comes upon the head, and also covers the whole skull; it is most repulsive-looking, and the sufferers from this are doomed. The mortality was heavy, but one cannot expect frail childhood to withstand the hardships and hunger which more matured humanity can bear more easily, and these waifs and strays succumbed daily in large numbers. There was a



INDIA'S STARVING MILLIONS.

crèche established for babies, and three or four women had been appointed to look after these helpless atoms. One woman, a comely and maternal-looking female, was nursing a poor wee mite of human skin and bone. It had been found two days previously in a deserted house in the town, and brought in by the police. There was absolutely no hope for this babe, and in spite of the care of its foster-mother, it was bound to die. There was a hospital attached for the ordinary sufferers from the universal bowel complaints; but all infectious diseases, such as small-pox, mumps, etc., were sent off to a segregation hospital, which had been established in the Bhuragargh, or old palace of the late Nawab of Banda. I mounted up the tower over the gateway, and got an extensive view over the country. It looked bare and desolate, and the signs of crops, or cultivation even, were few and far between. Looking across the river, I saw a curious volcanic hill, with a fort on the top. This, they told me, was the poor-house. In old days it had been the stronghold of Gurram Singh, who was one of the thorns in our side during the time of the Mutiny.

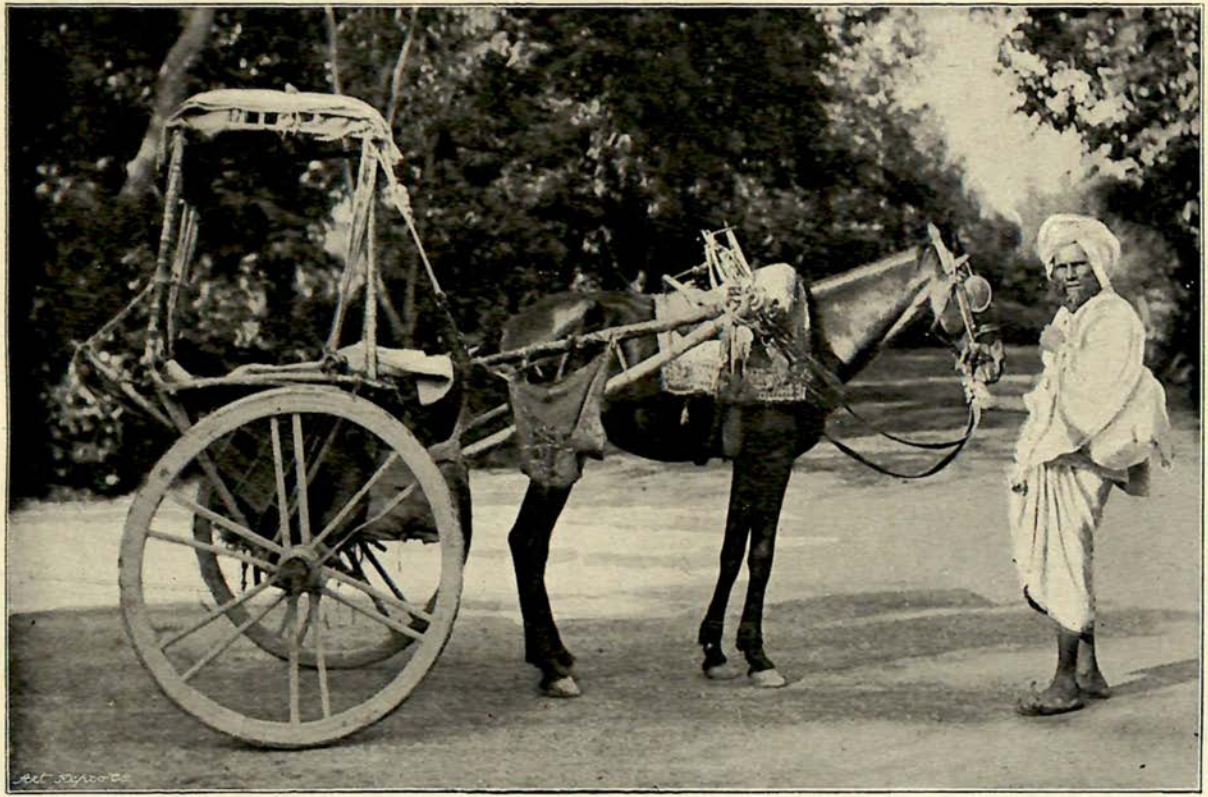
I had the orphanage practically to myself, as the hospital *compounder*, who was in charge, was away, and I only had a couple of sepoys to deal with. I was therefore able to pursue my inquiries unmolested, and questioned several of the orphans. They one and all told me the same story, that food had become scarcer and scarcer in their homes; that their parents had either died or drifted away, leaving their offspring unprovided for. They were poor and miserable relics of childhood, and resembled apes rather than human beings. They were however well-clothed, every one of them having a white linen jumper and a blanket. I only wish I could

say that their actual bodies were as well covered, but except in a few isolated instances, they were the merest frameworks of humanity. With their swollen stomachs and shrunken limbs, their appearance, if it were not so horrible, would be grotesque, as they had no semblance of thriving and prosperous childhood left. In spite of all this, I had no complaints about the insufficiency of food. They were fed twice a day, and the dole received seemed to be sufficient. I spent a long time in their midst, hearing their histories and asking and answering questions.

On my way back to mine inn I went through the bazaar and native town. It was a typical native city, with very narrow streets and gullies, leading to *oarts*,[1] where were huddled together, in every possible position, the ordinary square-roofed mud-huts of native India. I found a great number of these houses deserted, and the doors locked, and learned that the inmates had either died, drifted off to other parts, or had gone on to the works on the Banda-Baburu road. The town was evidently a poor one, and even the *bannias* who held the shops looked poverty-stricken.

I had had a long and tiring day, and was glad to get back to the dawk bungalow. In the evening Major Pond and I dined together, and spent the rest of the time in pleasant chat. He recounted to me his experiences in Burmah, where, when the country was first settled, he spent several years as police-officer of a remote and up-country district. On his first arrival there he was much annoyed at being sniped at in his rounds, till he thought of a plan which might, perhaps, prevent his being picked off by a dacoit from behind a tree. He ordered up the chief man of the village, and told him that he was to

[1] Squares.



MY STAGE COACH.

(Banda.)

accompany him in his daily rounds. The man was told that on the first shot fired his brains would be blown out, and a couple of the Major's Gourkha escort were told off for this duty. The man's fright was something too funny to see, as he went quite green, and at every nasty place upon the road where treachery might lurk, he squirmed in his saddle like a wounded snake. The measures, however, were effective and our policeman was never sniped at after his adopting this plan. As I have previously stated earlier in this chapter, Banda was one of the most carriageless places I had ever struck. Early the next morning, after a great deal of research, I dug out a *tum-tum*, the like of which I never wish to drive in again, and having borrowed a horse, drove off to the relief works along the Banda-Baburu road. I drove down this track, to which a Canadian corduroy road would have given points, till I came to the scene of operations. The number on the works is about 36,000, and I and the old waler stumbled and blundered along the new road for some five or six miles, during which I found a continuous stream of people at work, digging up the hard black soil at the side of the road, and piling it up in the middle. There seemed to be an absence of *bandobust* about the whole thing, and I was met on all sides by the cry, "*Panch pies pake burrah nahin hohaga*," [1] as these poor workers lifted the folds of their wrinkled skin, which did duty for their stomachs, and it certainly seemed, looking at them, that in many cases this was true. The sudden influx of workers, and the plague in Bombay having paralyzed trade, had upset all calculations, and there was a distinct scarcity of *khodalies* and other proper tools. I saw one poor old creature trying

[1] "Five pice will not make my stomach to grow big."

to do his allotted task of digging with the aid of a crooked stick, while two or three others were working with merely the backbone of a *khodalie*, the blade long ago having gone into the *Ewigkeit*. Women, too, were carrying the earth in the small brass dishes they use for their food, and altogether it was a sorry spectacle.

The *talsildar*, when I had been there for some time, came cantering up on a white pony with pink eyes and dyed mane and tail, so dearly loved by the opulent native. He seemed a specious, plausible sort of creature, who required hanging, and was most fulsome in his compliments to me, and assumed quite a paternal manner with the workers. He was got up within an inch of his life in the highest style of native dandyism, patent leather side-spring shoes, with white pearl false buttons included, and his steed was gaily caparisoned with a bran new saddle and bridle, so I have no doubt that he found his stewardship a profitable one. It is an ill wind that blows nobody any good, and many a native subordinate official thanks the gods that the famine has, at any rate, been the means of lining his pockets with good rupees at the expense of his humbler brethren. It was an excellent thing that a special famine officer had been appointed for this district, and not before he was wanted. I have no doubt that Major Pond found several things which required rectification, and notably that the workers should get their full wages, which, judging from what I saw, and the numerous complaints I heard, I should say was not the case.

The poor-house next received my attention. Here the people were being fed when I arrived, and the condition of the place, taken as a whole, was no worse and no better than several others I have seen. It was filled to overflowing, and the surplus was camped outside.

While I was there, a woman was brought in by the police, who had found her deserted, and left to die, in an empty house in the bazaar. She was absolutely naked, except for a blanket which had been thrown over her when placed upon the *charpoy* on which she was brought in. This was certainly the very worst case I saw, and even as I write I cannot refrain from shuddering when I recall her awful state. She was filthy to a degree, and her black hair, which hung down her back, was a matted mass of vermin and dirt indescribable. Her limbs and body were shrunk down to absolute nothingness, and the mere shell of her carcase was all that was left. Even the *kala* doctor, who was there, when he saw her, shook his head, and said mournfully—"Poor thing, she is past recall. I can do nothing to save her." He gave her a strong dose of opium, which would deaden, if not alleviate her sufferings, and help her out of this world in as easy a manner as possible. She died before I left.

I visited the small-pox hospital, which was, of course, separate and segregated from the main building. This dread scourge was raging all over Banda, and there were over fifty cases of this disease from out of the inmates of the poor-house alone.

The poor-house was most picturesquely situated on a high hill which dominated the town, and the road which led to it was also worthy of notice. As I drove down to the river I noticed a curious blending of the new and old. The shelving banks which lead down to the river are a picturesque and tumbled mass of rocks, through which the road has been cut. The river itself is crossed by a rude bridge of native boats, which are lashed together, and in the thatched ends of which the people who look after the bridge and tolls live. Hard by, a little above,

the river is spanned by a modern and high railway-bridge, which, in the rainy season, is the only means of crossing, as the river level rises high up the brick piers of the bridge, and the boat-bridge is useless, and in fact taken away.

I drove, on the way back, through another part of the bazaar, which by the bye is lighted in a most primitive manner, a number of hurricane stable-lanterns being placed, at rare intervals, on poles along the streets. I stopped to watch some native turners at work with the rudest of lathes, worked by the foot; they were turning out a series of Indian toys, and legs for *charpoys*, which, when covered with the bright red and green colours so dear to the oriental, gladden and brighten their somewhat dirty and dingy homes.

One curious thing I noticed in my tour was how, with the change of latitude, the seasons changed and the climatic seasons varied. At Bijapur the people were praying for rain to help to mature the crops, such as they were. In the Bundelkund tract, however, rain would have been a calamity, and have spoilt what little produce there was, by inducing mould and mildew amongst the fields, which stood ripe for the sickle. In the Punjaub and North-West the opposite was the case, and here rain, if not of too heavy a nature, was anxiously looked for.

That night, having exhausted, as far as lay in my power, the possibilities of Banda, I left at midnight for Jhansi.

CHAPTER XVIII

JHANSI

JHANSI is the head *entrepôt* of the Indian Midland Railway. It is the junction for Cawnpur, Agra, and Manikpur. It is a busy place, and owes its recent growth to the settlement here of the railway and all its official appurtenances. The station is an imposing building of red brick, and the railway offices are built in a corresponding style of magnificence. Our train on arrival, owing to the plague scare in Bombay, which had now reached the up-country districts, was, with its passengers, subjected to a vigorous search, by the medical staff appointed for the purpose, for suspected plague patients. I was able, however, to satisfy the authorities that I had been absent from Bombay long enough for possible infection to either have declared itself or vanished ; and, after a short parley with the doctor, was permitted to leave the precincts of the station with my bag and baggage. It was, however, otherwise with the native portion of my fellow-travellers, as they were individually gone over like persons passing the Customs, and in some cases which looked suspicious the temperature of the suspects I believe was taken ; however, they in the long run all passed safely through the ordeal. I did not stay to see the end of the proceedings, but hurried off to the dawk bungalow, anxious for bath and break-

fast. When I had cleansed the outer and refreshed the inner man, I went off to look up Mr. Allen, the Deputy-Commissioner. After being hustled about from pillar to post, I at last ran this official to earth in the Court House, where he was trying an assault case between a couple of peasants. He invited me on to the Bench, and I sat through the case, listening to the mass of conflicting evidence produced and volubly sworn to by both sides. When the case was over—I think the man who had been hammered by his compatriot won—and the Deputy asked me into his private room, he let me look at the statistics of his district, and left me busy, pencil and note-book in hand, while he returned to the court to serve out another dose of justice.

The area of Jhansi is 3587 square miles, with a population of nearly seven lacs, of which the city and cantonment absorb half a lac.

The numbers employed on works on February 6 were—

	Men.	Women.	Children.
Workers	11,927	16,186	10,394
Dependents	254	282	7,357
	12,181	16,468	17,751
Grand total ...	46,400.		

The death-rate for the month of December in '95 showed for the district 2362, while for the corresponding month of '96 the numbers had jumped up to 3618.

The relief works were the usual making of *cutcha* roads, but a couple of tanks were also in course of construction, and the numbers employed on these latter during the coming hot weather would be considerably augmented. In other parts of the district a goodly number were employed in village relief works, in making small tanks for local requirements and digging *cutcha*

wells. I had better perhaps explain what a *cutcha* well is. It is a hole dug in a field where there is a likelihood of water being found. It is merely left rough, and its sides are not bricked as in the case of *pucca* wells. The former last about three years before becoming silted up. The water is lifted by the wheel-system, a couple of bullocks drawing up a skin which on arriving at the surface is tipped into a small tank made to receive the stream. The water is then conducted off by means of small channels over the field to be irrigated. It is astonishing what a quantity of water a couple of bullocks can raise in this primitive way during a working-day. The system is prevalent all over the Punjaub and North-West, and I saw in my travels thousands of these wells, with bullocks and peasants hard at work supplying the crops with the refreshing water. In the North-West Provinces alone, as a result of famine labour during the last twelve months, over a million of these wells had been sunk. The staple product of the Jhansi district is jowari; only 37 per cent., however, of the cultivable area had been sown, but what had been laid under cultivation had produced excellent results. The out-turn of the cotton crop was very poor, the estimate being from 4 to 6 annas.[1] About a month ago excellent rain had fallen, and this had been the salvation of these parts. The officials said they had the famine practically under control, and knew where

[1] Crops and their out-turn, as in fact most things, are spoken of by the ratio of the divisible fraction of a rupee. A 16-anna crop means a full one; an 8-anna, half; 4-anna, quarter; and so on. In racing parlance, we talk of a pony going a 12-anna gallop, instead of three-quarter speed. An 8-anna gallop indicates half-speed. This is convenient, but is somewhat puzzling to those unacquainted with the method.

the food-supplies were, and that these were ample for present needs. Prices since the rain had fallen slightly. Fodder was a difficulty, as the supply was even then short, and would become scarcer as time went on.

In the afternoon, when the sun had become less powerful, I went off on a tour of exploration to the old fort. It stands on a hill which dominates the city, and is a strong place. In the old days it was considered impregnable, till Sir Hugh Rose proved that British pluck and endurance could overcome what was previously considered insuperable. Even now it is a stronghold of no mean order, and should troublous times again arise, would prove a valuable place of refuge for the European residents of the station and cantonment. It has been armed with some old 64-pounder M. L. siege-guns, which would give a good account of themselves in case of necessity. My tonga-wallah, fearing I think the stability of his harness, absolutely refused to drag me up the steep winding road which led to the fortification, and so I toiled up this on my own feet in the hot sun. A detachment of the Royal Artillery guard the fort, and the sergeant in charge took me under his wing, and thoroughly and efficiently explained the whole plan of campaign which ended in the defeat and flight of the celebrated Red Queen of Jhansi. He showed me the route taken by Sir Hugh Rose with his avenging army from Nandgaon, and where he took up a position behind a small hill to the right, from which he eventually breached the wall of the city.

Murray gives the following succinct account of the history of Jhansi—

"The district remained under the rule of the Peishwas till 1817, when they then ceded their rights to the East

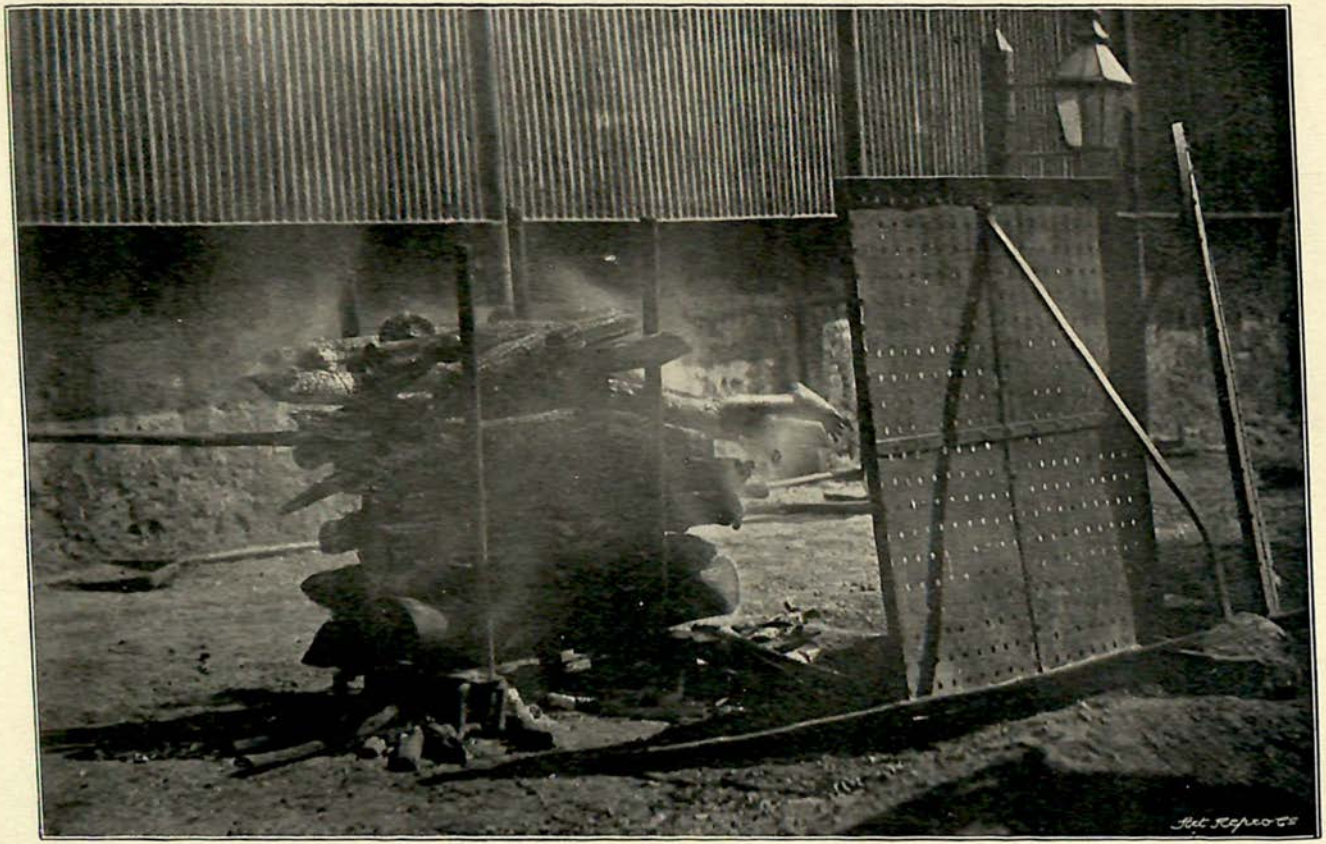
India Company. The native rulers ruled under British protection until their folly and incompetency ruined the country. When the dynasty died out in 1853, their territories lapsed to the British Government. The Jhansi state, with Jalaun and Chandau, was formed into a Superintendency, while a pension was granted to the Rani, or widow of the late Rajah Rao. The Rani, however, considered herself aggrieved, both because she was not allowed to adopt an heir and because the slaughter of cattle was permitted in the Jhansi territory. The events of 1857 accordingly found Jhansi ripe for rebellion. In May it was known that the troops were disaffected, and on the 5th of June a few men of the 12th Native Infantry seized the fort containing the treasure and magazine. Many European officers were shot the same day. The remainder, who had taken refuge in the fort, capitulated a few days after, and were massacred with their families to the number of sixty-six persons, in spite of a promise of protection sworn on the Koran and Ganges water. The Rani then attempted to seize the supreme authority, but the usual anarchic quarrels arose between the rebels, during which the Orchla (a neighbouring fort) leaders laid siege to Jhansi, and plundered the country mercilessly. On the 5th April, 1858, the fort and town were recovered by Sir Hugh Rose." The rebels were driven out of the fort, and eventually took refuge on a high hill with a precipitous scarp, about three miles away. This is called "Retribution Hill," as the avenging army pursued the foe relentlessly, and scaling the heights they eventually drove the insurgents over the precipice, where they were dashed to pieces at the bottom. The Rani herself fled with Tantia Topi, and finally fell in battle at the foot of

the rock-fortress of Gwalior. Malleson, quoting Sir Hugh Rose, says—

"The town and fortress were garrisoned by 11,000 men, composed of rebel sepoys, foreign mercenaries, and local levies, and they were led by a woman who believed her cause to be just."

While at Banda I had forwarded to Major Ivor McIvor, the Resident of Gwalior, a letter of introduction from my good friend Dr. Pollen, the Collector of Bombay, asking him if he would grant me permission to put up at the Guest House. The Maharajah Scindia has built a most sumptuous house for the benefit of European travellers visiting his capital. He however quite rightly expects that intending visitors should write beforehand and ask leave to occupy this excellent private hotel. On my return from the fort I found a wire from Major McIvor, most courteously asking me to be his guest at the Residency, and saying that he would send a carriage to the station to meet the train arriving at Gwalior at 4 p.m. the next day.

I had made arrangements with Mr. Allen to go with him to the poor-house at Jhansi early in the morning, and so at about six o'clock he called for me in his cart at the dawk bungalow. We drove to the poor-house, which is some three miles off, situated at the foot of Retribution Hill. The Deputy intended to make a draft of those of the inmates who were fit to go on the works. Out of a total of 650, he was able, with the help of the Civil Surgeon, to select over 80 men and women capable of doing a day's work for a day's wage. This spoke well for the management of the establishment, and the *morale* and physique of the paupers was far better than in many other poor-houses. We then went



THE HINDOO'S END.

on to visit the segregation camp, which the Civil Surgeon had just fitted up for the reception of plague cases, should any occur. There were three distinct camps—one for Europeans, Mahommedans and Hindoos respectively. The arrangements were first-rate, and great care had been bestowed upon the details, even to the provision of coffins and a pile of wood for the funeral pyres of possible Hindoo victims.

The place, however, had no inmates, and I believe it was never called into requisition. It was, however, comforting to feel that everything was ready if one did succumb to an attack of the plague. On the way up to Gwalior I had passed the palace of the Rajah of Datia. He is a petty chief of the second-class, with a revenue of nine lacs of rupees. His palace stands in a commanding position upon a hill, a magnificent white pile of buildings, which is a conspicuous object from the train.

A little further on we came to the town of Sonagar, which presents a striking view to the passenger. It is built on the side of a hill, and the fort and palace are on the top. The white flat-topped buildings, with the innumerable pinnacles and minarets of the palace, silhouette the sky-line, and present a striking contrast to the bright blue vault of heaven above, and the deep brown hill upon which they stand.

The whole country I passed through was at first rough, scrubby jungle, but later we came into a curiously broken tract of clay, where the rains and consequent erosion had formed a series of nullahs, the most fantastic shapes being assumed by the mud-pillars and ravines.

Wherever there was a chance of a crop, cultivation had been pursued, but the greater part of the country was only fit for grazing purposes. I was much struck

with the herds of excellent cattle that I saw, and especially the sheep. The latter were of really good quality, and in size and shape reminded me of the Cotswolds of the Oxfordshire Downs. They had the same black faces and broad backs, and were very different from the gaunt, goat-like animals I had seen in other parts of India. True to time the train ran into Gwalior, and I found a scarlet-coated *chupprassie*, with a gorgeous gold belt, awaiting my arrival, with one of the state carriages for my personal use and benefit, ready to convey me to the Residency. Assuming the air of a Lieutenant-Governor at least, when all was ready I gave the order to proceed, and was quickly whirled off to the comfortable and hospitable Residency, where I received a warm welcome from Major and Mrs. McIvor.

PART III

IN THE PUNJAUB

CHAPTER XIX

GWALIOR

WHEN we had discussed afternoon tea, Major McIvor asked whether I were ready for work or play? I naturally agreed to play, and so he proposed that we should go to the Club and have a round of golf. Nothing loth, we set off to the Club which the Maharajah of Scindia has built for the convenience and comfort of the European residents of Gwalior. It is a most compact and yet commodious building, and is the daily meeting-place of the station; and there are golf-links, tennis and cricket-grounds outside, while the building consists of a large reading-room, a ball-room and billiard-room, the whole being very comfortably furnished, and lit with the electric light. How very different was my experience from that of Sleeman, who about forty years ago visited this very place. He remarks that on pitching his camp on the confines of the palace, he was much annoyed by the disorderly soldiery of the Rajah, who invaded his camp, and upon whom he had to keep a watchful eye lest they should loot any of his possessions, horses, or camp equipage. While I was

playing billiards with the uncle of the present Maharajah, who with the prince came down to the club that afternoon, I could not help the thought of the great contrast between the old *régime* and the new crossing my mind. In former days here was Sleeman strictly on his guard against the followers of the king; while I upon a first-class billiard-table by Burroughes and Watts, with electric light as an illuminant, was playing a friendly game of billiards with a scion of the noble house of Scindia. *Autre temps autres mœurs*, and in nothing is the power of the British shown more clearly than in the beneficent and civilizing effect contact with Europeans has had over the dominant races and families of India.

Gwalior is a State which has a very interesting history, and played no mean part in the earlier days of Hindustan. The earliest records date back to, as some authorities say, the year B.C. 310; while others fix the foundation of the *raj*[1] in the year 275 A.D. Cunningham, in his *Reports on the Archæological Surveys*, agrees with the latter date.

According to Cunningham, Toramanna, a tributary prince under Guptas, rebelled, and obtained the sovereignty of all the territory lying between the Jumna and Nerbudda, and in the reign of his son, in 275 A.D., Gwalior was founded by Suraj Sen, a Kachhwale chief, who was a leper. There is a legend which says that this chief was once hunting on the hill of Gopagiri, upon which the fort of Gwalior now stands. He obtained a drink of water from the hermit Gwalipa, which cured him of his leprosy. In gratitude for this cure, he built a fort on the hill, and called it Gwaliawar or Gwalior.

This Kachhwalia dynasty was succeeded by seven

[1] *Raj*, throne; dynasty, power.

Panhara princes, who ruled till 1232; when Gwalior fell into the hands of Altamsh. From 1232 to Timour's invasion in 1398, the Emperor of Delhi used Gwalior as a State prison. The Gwalior chiefs paid tribute to Delhi till 1465, when it was besieged by the King of Jaunpur, and compelled to acknowledge his allegiance. In 1761 Gwalior was taken by the Jat Rana of Gohad, and in 1779 was captured by Major Popham from the Marathas, into whose hands it had fallen, and it was restored to the Rana of Gohad. It was again taken by the Mahrattas under Maharajah Scindia in 1784, re-captured by the English under General White in 1803, and restored to Scindia in 1805. It was occupied for a third time by the British in 1844 after the battles of Maharajpur and Paniar.

At the time of the Mutiny the great warlike Mahratta prince, Scindia, had a very powerful army of 10,000 troops,[1] consisting of irregular cavalry, seven regiments of infantry, and twenty-six guns, with their proper complement of artillery. This force was officered by Englishmen, and was well-drilled and disciplined. Scindia was at this time twenty-three years of age, a first-rate horseman, and a brave and intrepid leader of his soldiery. Had he decided to throw in his lot with the rebels, he might have marched to Agra and made himself the master of that city, which is only sixty-five miles distant from his capital. But the more prudent and far-seeing counsels of his minister prevailed; who persuaded Scindia to deal subtilely with his dangerous army, and by a policy of evasions and delays kept it from joining the then victorious rebels. Scindia was,

[1] This force had been originally brought to its present state of perfection by Skinner and Bernier.

however, powerless to prevent his mutinous soldiers from killing their European officers. Seven officers and several ladies escaped the massacre and reached Scindia's palace. They were sent on by the prince to the Rajah of Dholpur, where they were most kindly treated, and eventually forwarded to Agra. For some months Gwalior remained quiet, though the whole surrounding country was in rebellion. On May 22, 1858, Sir Hugh Rose fought the battle of Kalpi, and inflicted a severe defeat upon the mutineers, who retreated to Gwalior. On June 1 Scindia with his army moved out to meet them, and an engagement took place near Morar. Malleson thus describes the battle which ensued—"About 7 a.m. the rebels advanced, and Scindia's artillery opened fire upon them. But the smoke was scarcely cleared away when the rebel skirmishers closed to their flanks, and 2000 horsemen charging, carried the guns. Simultaneously with this charge, Scindia's infantry and cavalry, with the exception of his bodyguard, either joined the rebels or took up a position indicative of their intention not to fight. The rebels then attacked the bodyguard, who defended themselves bravely, but the contest was too unequal, and Scindia turned and fled, accompanied by a very few of the survivors. He did not draw rein till he had reached Agra."

Sir Hugh Rose followed up the enemy, and eventually was joined by Brigadier-General Sir Robert Napier (Lord Napier of Magdala) at Bhadapur.

Arrangements were at once made to attack the enemy, and they were driven from their position. The next morning was fought the battle of Kotah-ki-serai, about five miles south-east of Gwalior. The resistance was stubborn, but eventually the British carried the day

and put the rebels to flight. Amongst the fugitives was the rebel Queen of Jhansi, who, resolute in council and on the field, was the soul of the conspirators; clad in male attire, she led her cavalry to the attack—but her men failed her, and she was obliged to fly. She might have escaped, but her horse stumbled, and a hussar, ignorant of her rank or sex, cut her down. That night her devoted followers burned her body upon the field of battle. The whole of Gwalior city and environments, with the exception of the fort, were now in the hands of the British. This fort was still held by a handful of fanatics, and its capture discloses a bright page in the annals of British pluck and daring.

Murray thus describes the attack and capture—

"On the morning of the 20th, Lieutenant Rose (25th Bombay Native Infantry) was in command of a detachment of his regiment at the *Kotwali*, or police-station, not far from the main gateway of the rock-fort. As the guns from its ramparts continued to fire, Rose proposed to a brother officer, Lieutenant Waller, who commanded a small party, that they should attempt to capture the fortress with their joint parties, urging that if the risk was great, the honour would be still greater. Waller cheerfully assented, and the two officers set off with their men and a blacksmith, whom, not unwilling, they had engaged for the service.

"They crept up to the first gateway unseen. Then the blacksmith, a powerful man, forced it, and so with the five other gates that opposed their progress. By the time the sixth gate had been forced the alarm was given, and when the assailants reached the archway beyond the last gate, they were met by the fire of a gun which had been brought to bear on them.

"Dashing onwards, unscathed by the fire, they speedily engaged in a hand-to-hand contest with the garrison. The fight was desperate, and many men fell on both sides. The gallantry of Rose and Waller and their men carried all before them. Rose especially distinguished himself. Just in the hour of victory, however, as he was inciting his men to make the final charge which proved successful, a musket was fired at him from behind the wall."

"The man who had fired the shot, a mutineer from Bareilley, then rushed out and cut him down. Waller came up and dispatched the rebel, but too late, however, to save his friend. But the rock-fortress was gained, and continued in British hands till 1886."

It is such deeds of "derring-do" which stand out in the history of our nation, and have made our empire what it is.

That evening at dinner I met Mr. Maris, who is the conservator of the Museum and general superintendent of the gardens, parks, and pleasaunces of the Maharajah of Gwalior. Mr. Maris has had an almost unique experience in his life, and he was one of the first, if not the very first European, to get beyond the treaty ports of Japan, in the old days when the interior was a closed and sealed book to the adventurous traveller. Even before Miss Bird made Japan famous and known to the English reading public, Mr. Maris had traversed the islands in the interests of an enterprising English firm, and had sent home a valuable collection of botanical and entomological specimens. The Resident asked me that night if I would not like to go and inspect the fort, and on my assenting, gave orders for a carriage to be ready for me, and telephoned to the State stables for

an elephant to await my arrival the next morning at the foot of the road leading to the fort. The road, which is scarped out of the rocks, is inaccessible for wheeled traffic, and the best and only way of reaching the summit is on elephant-back.

After *chota hazri* the next morning, I sought Major McIvor, whom I found hard at work in his den, and went into famine matters with him. I obtained the following details about the state of Gwalior and its dependencies. The area is 13,000 square miles, and the population is nearly twenty lacs. The jurisdiction of state is divided into three *prants*, as the sub-divisions are called, viz. Gwalior, Malwa, and Isagargh. The *prant* officer is known by the vernacular name of *Sirsoopah*. There was slight famine and distress in certain districts in the northern parts of the State which border upon Dholpur and the Agra division, notably at Etawah and Towagargh, the latter being the worst spot in the dominions. Several local relief works had been started, and the State was supporting some 15,000 souls. There had been a certain amount of migration over the border to Agra, but in this direction it was small. There had been a large migration from the other districts to Malwa, but this was chiefly on account of the cattle, owing to the scarcity of fodder in Gwalior. In Towagargh it was estimated that ten per cent. of the population would be on Government hands in the near future. In the other parts afflicted it would not amount to more than half that percentage. The area of land under cultivation was only eighteen per cent. under *rabi*, as compared with last year in the worst districts; but in the best years the cultivated area of the whole country rarely exceeds fifty-five per cent. The Durbar had voted large

sums of money to have the famine well in hand, and were fully prepared to take the matter up. The chief staple products of the soil were *jowari* and *maccai* (Indian maize). Large *takavi* advances had been given, some free of interest, some at a specially low rate, at the discretion of the district officers, and the *kiss* had been remitted either wholly or in part where necessary. The Government of India had already sanctioned the construction of a two-foot gauge railway from Gwalior to Sipri, and this would furnish earth-work upon which relief labourers could be profitably employed. It was also on the *tapis* to construct a similar railway from Gwalior to Bhind; while sanction had been already given, and the works begun, on the Bhima-Goonaburah extension of the Bhima-Goona line. There were some 18,000 souls already at work on this line, but this, being a Public Works Department scheme, did not enter into the calculations of the famine relief works.

This line will touch Kotah, and will also open up the rich grain-producing districts of Rajputana. Major McIvor, though naturally very anxious about the prospects of the coming season and the likelihood of distress, did not think that the matter would be beyond their powers to successfully combat, and spoke hopefully of the arrangements being made and already in full swing.

After breakfast I started for the fort, and at the foot of the hill found the gaily-caparisoned *hathi*, with his attendant mahout and a State *chupprassie*, awaiting my arrival. The huge and unwieldy beast made light of the ascent, and wobbled up the road cut out of the face of the cliff. I passed through the gateways which were so successfully carried by assault by Messrs. Rose and

Waller, and eventually arrived at the wide plateau on the top. My guide gave me a most fluent description of the various buildings and temples. He knew a few words of English, and after a florid description in the vernacular, would give me the key-note of the situation by winding up with "*Monkey Temple, sahib,*" or "*Elephant Gate, huzoor,*" as the case might be. I made a hurried tour of the whole place, which is most interesting and well worthy of a visit by any one interested in the archæological relics of ancient Ind.

I will not weary my readers with details, for is not the description of the fort and the temples and other wonders that it contains written in the chronicles of Murray? I went to the northern corner of the plateau, and from there the panorama of the country and the city and palaces, glistening white in the sun, lay like an open book at my feet. I gazed over the plain which had been the scene of the final and decisive battle; and saw on the arid and sandy plains the "dust devils" swirling and dancing over the wide expanse which lay below. On my way down I visited the rock sculptures, which are unique in Northern India, both for their number and gigantic size. They are hewn out of the steep cliff on the north-west scarp below the fort. The largest figure of the group is 57 feet high. The largest figure of Shiva in the Caves of Elephanta is only 16 feet, so that the figures of Gwalior dwarf into insignificance what is considered to be one of the wonders of the East by those of our European brethren lately landed in Bombay. My time was limited, and I hurried off to keep an appointment made with Mr. Maris at the Museum. He has devoted several years to a complete collection of the flora, fauna, etc., of the State, and the specimens that he has carefully

arranged in the handsome building erected by the Maharajah for the purpose, are practically unique. I particularly admired some cases of the indigenous birds, which were most beautifully set up amidst a faithful copy of the scenes and habitat in which they had lived. They were some of the best specimens of the taxidermist's art that I have ever seen. Mr. Maris told me with peculiar pride that they were his special hobby, and the work of his own hand. I could have spent hours in this place, but, alas, I was working against time, and so had to get on after a very hurried inspection of the wonders of nature arranged and displayed in this excellent institution. I drove to the palace with the intention of inscribing my name in the book kept for the purpose. The palace is a fine building surrounding a courtyard, and with magnificent gardens at the back. At the far end of the courtyard one drives under a *porte-cochère*, which gives upon the Maharajah's private apartments on the one side, and the Durbar hall and State apartments on the other. His Highness, hearing of my arrival, kindly sent an attendant down to say that he would be happy to see me. I was accordingly, ushered up-stairs, where in a library, furnished in the latest and best European style, I found the Maharajah seated at a table covered with papers, and immersed in affairs of State. Looking round at the pictures on the walls, on which there were some excellent engravings, I saw the place of honour was occupied by a magnificent photogravure of the Queen-Empress. The Maharajah courteously waved me to a chair, and pushing over a box of cigarettes, asked me how I liked Gwalior? I replied that I was pleased and charmed with the whole place. His Highness speaks English perfectly, and is

one of the best types of a highly-educated and polished Indian prince. Scindia attends to his own State, and is well up and fully cognizant of all that goes on. He has indeed a very important finger in the pie, and I found that he was fully posted in all the affairs going on around him. After discussing London, and the regret that he would not be able to take part in the coming Jubilee rejoicings, our talk drifted naturally into famine. I briefly sketched to him my tour, and gave him some of my experiences, in which he took a deep interest. We must have been chatting for nearly an hour, on all sorts of topics of general and particular interest, before the Maharajah gave me an opportunity of taking my leave. As I was making my adieux, his Highness said, "Oh, by the bye, to-morrow I am going off to my country-seat. Will you come? I will take you over in my own train." His Highness has a hunting-box about six or seven miles from his palace, to which he retires at times from the cares of State. It is connected with the palace by a toy two-foot railway, which the Maharajah has recently made.

I was very much disappointed that I could not accept his kind invitation, and told him that the British public was a stern task-master, who would brook no dalliance with its interests; that I had made arrangements to get on to Agra that very afternoon, and so was most regretfully compelled to decline his kind and courteous invitation. I then took my leave, expressing a hope that on some future occasion I should have an opportunity of renewing an acquaintance so pleasantly begun.

That same night found me at Agra, and installed in Laurie's Hotel. My stay at Gwalior, and the great

kindness and hospitality I received there on all hands, will always remain a very pleasant memory.

NOTE.—Since these lines were written it is with the deepest regret that from an Indian paper I learned the sudden death by cholera of Major McIvor, the Resident, at the early age of 51. Indian climate, and the ceaseless work and responsibility which high office entailed, have claimed another victim to add to the almost countless roll of devoted Englishmen who have died at their posts at the call of duty. Henry Lawrence's epitaph, "He tried to do his duty," might be graved o'er many a tomb where lie the mortal remains of those brave Englishmen who have given their lives for England's and India's good.

Poor McIvor, cut off in practically what was the zenith of his power—it is sad to reflect on his comparatively early death. He was always a marked man—a giant amongst Tritons—and his conspicuous ability led him on throughout his triumphant and successful career. Even at Trinity, Dublin, he was remarkable for his great ability, and excelled in all he undertook. Besides being a first-class scholar and the best man of his year, he was one of the finest oars that T.C.D. ever produced, and stroked the first Dublin boat that ever rowed at Henley. We could better have spared another man.

CHAPTER XX

AGRA

AGRA is the second city in size in the North-West Provinces, and has a population of 187,000. I have included it for the purposes of consecutive narrative in the Punjaub part of my wanderings, but it must not be forgotten that it is really under the jurisdiction of the Lieutenant-Govenor of the North-West Provinces. Agra is 841 miles from Calcutta by rail, and 139 from Delhi. It is built on the western bank of the Jumna, which is crossed by a magnificent railway-bridge of sixteen spans. At the time of my visit this river had dwindled down to a mere stream, and its bed was occupied by gardens for the cultivation of melons and gourds, for which Agra is famous. These gardens exhibit the ingenuity of the native *mallee*, and as the soil is the mere sand of the river, and liable to be carried away by the first dust-storm that blows, each small plot is enclosed by wind-screens made out of elephant-grass to restrain, crib, cabin and confine the ever-shifting sand. In the rainy season the Jumna becomes a turgid, swollen river, which washes the walls of the fort, and is about two miles wide from shore to shore.

After breakfast I drove to the bungalow of the Commissioner of Agra, Mr. Rose, who kindly granted me

an interview. The total area of the Agra division is over 10,000 square miles. Besides the city of Agra, it contains the important towns of Farukabad (73,000) and Muttra (57,000). The total number on relief works in the division was 53,000, and these works were conducted and managed by the Permanent Works Department. Fearing that famine was approaching, a careful inquiry was made in 1896, and it was then forecast that Muttra, Agra, and a portion of Etawah, were liable to be affected. Subsequent events proved that this forecast was correct. In the previous September and October, large advances (*takavi*) to dig *cutcha* wells were made, and this did much to save a large area of the *rabi* crop. In every village in the district special lists of the inhabitants had been prepared, of persons entitled to and likely to require gratuitous relief, viz. the aged, the infirm, and *purdah nashin* women.[1]

When the pinch came these lists were quickly verified, and relief at once afforded. This precaution, taken in time, saved a very vast number of lives, and I have no doubt whatever that the policy pursued by the Government of the North-West Provinces will be coded and adopted all over India, in subsequent periods of scarcity and distress. The present head of the North-West (Sir Anthony Macdonald) is one of the greatest living authorities on the famine question, and it is owing to his special knowledge and grasp of the subject, that the famine of 1896–97, which was the severest ever felt in these Provinces, was so successfully grappled with.

One of the great features of the Agra organization was the relief afforded to *purdah nashin*, and to the respectable poor. An almost insuperable difficulty in a

[1] Women behind the veil; Zenana women.

crisis of this kind, is approaching these secluded women, and finding out their wants and requirements. Their creed prevents official entry into their homes, or personal inspection, and it is only by indirect means that their cases can be looked into. The European ladies of Agra did noble work in visiting their homes, and committees were formed, amongst which the city was parcelled out. In this manner was the difficulty surmounted. Great help, too, was given by many influential and energetic natives. At the time of my visit over 3000 *purdah nashin*, in the city of Agra alone, were receiving relief sufficient for their maintenance, and a similar scheme was being carried out simultaneously at Muttra and Farukabad. The actual cost of this relief in Agra amounted to 5000 rupees per month; half of this sum was found by the Government, the other half being raised by subscriptions amongst the influential European and native residents of the station. Were it not for these relief measures, the distress and mortality in the crowded city would have been enormous. The state of the poor-house will show that efficient measures were being taken, as, notwithstanding the vast population, there were at the time of my visit only some 300 inmates, and these were the waifs and strays of the population.

In spite of the extreme precautions of the Government, the native organs of the press cavilled at their proceedings, and complained of the inattention of the authorities. A story which was at the time of my visit extant, and out of which the native organ made much capital, will serve to point the moral.

A woman, a few days previously, had been found on the river-bank taking the corpses from the sacred stream

and subsisting on them. Here was a horrible and revolting instance of distress. The native papers made the most of it, and reviled the Government for its supineness, to the full extent of their powers of vituperation. Pious Brahmins and irrepressible Babus rushed into print, and loaded the powers with every opprobrious epithet in their extensive vocabulary. The woman was conveyed to the poor-house, and given the vegetarian diet of the orthodox Hindoo. This fare she steadily declined to partake of, and her state became a parlous one. The officials visited the poor-house, and on instituting an inquiry, it was discovered that the woman in question was a *ghori*[1] by caste, who had subsisted on human flesh all her life. This caste is very scarce in India at the present time, though in former days it was much more numerous. Here then was the mare's nest; revolting and filthy as it seems to be, yet the powers were in no way responsible for the state of affairs. It only shows how careful and watchful of the interests of the general public they were, that amidst the seething mass of humanity of the teeming population under their control, they should have found and laid hands, with a beneficent object, upon this repulsive and inhuman atom.

During our conversation Mr. Rose discussed with me the question of current prices of food-stuffs in Agra; which had reached an unprecedented level during the present famine. In 1877, in the Agra division, the price of grain never went below ten seers to the rupee, and was generally twelve and upwards. In the present year it had sunk as low as seven and a half, and had continued for weeks together at eight and a half or nine.

[1] Has the word *ghori* any connection with the word ghoul? I am not philologist enough to discover.

It had now slackened a bit, and yet the distress of the people was far more intense in 1877 than in 1896. Mr. Rose's solution of this was the great improvement in the material condition of the people generally. The status of the small landed proprietors and cultivators, to say nothing of the mere labouring class, had shown immense signs of amelioration during the last quarter of a century. Under these circumstances, though the prices were higher, yet the *masses* were better provided for, and more able to resist the pressure. Another side-light upon the famine, was that the contractors of the ferries, who had bought the right of exacting tolls from wayfarers using these means of transit, were not able to recover their dues. They had appealed to Government, who had to remit a portion of the money covenanted for. The fiscal arrangements of the State would suffer, but not in the way it was expected. It had been originally estimated that only about a quarter of the *kiss*, which totalled nearly forty lacs of rupees in the division, would be recoverable. It turned out, however, quite unexpectedly, that a much larger portion would be paid, and the Government entertained hopes, with anything like decent luck, of getting in thirty-five lacs. On the other hand the *bye* revenues would suffer, and they counted on a large loss in excise and stamps; but the income-tax would increase. It is beyond my province to discuss these details to show how wide-spreading and far-reaching in its consequences a scarcity in India becomes. The estimate of the expense to the Government of the famine in the Agra division was put down at eight lacs of rupees, and this money the powers that be would have to find in addition to current expenses.

Before leaving, the Commissioner invited me to go the next morning to see the relief works, and promised to call for me at the hotel about seven o'clock.

When I got back to my inn, I found that the occupant of the next room to mine was an artist, and he was painting the Taj. After watching him at work, I asked, "Does the Taj look like that? What extraordinary colouring!" "Oh," he said, "I see you don't understand; this is a sketch of the buildings by *moonlight!*" After some conversation we exchanged names, and I found he was a Mr. Rich, an American, who was a great friend of a friend of mine, the American Vice-Consul at Bombay. The Vice-Consul had told me that, in the course of my travels, I might run against Mr. Rich, as he was wandering about somewhere in the northern parts of India. This mutual acquaintance helped us, and we sat after lunch in our long chairs exchanging confidences and experiences, or, as our Yankee friends say, "swapping lies." Mr. Rich has attained a celebrity in the artistic circles of Boston for his picture of the Sphinx by moonlight; which he had painted on the spot, and subsequently exhibited with the due accessories of a darkened room, with electric light thrown upon the picture. It was shown in what corresponds in Boston to our Academy in London, and at once achieved a big success. My artist friend was following out the same idea when he grappled with the Taj under the soft influence of Luna's rays. As we were whiling away the time till the sun became less powerful, we were pestered by a series of "box-wallahs," with their "*Want to buy a nice shawl, sahib?*" "*Model of the Taj, sahib?*" and the thousand and one things that these itinerant rogues plant at fabulous prices upon

the unwary globe-trotter. It was only when I let the assembled crowd have a stream of the finest invective and profanity, in which I cursed their relations to the remotest degree in the vernacular, that they left us in peace. We retained, however, a ventriloquist and conjurer, and he gave a very good exhibition of his powers. As the grand "finale trick-act," as the circus folk say, he said, "*I will call the crows, sahib; you see, sahib.*" He produced a bundle of crow-feathers from his bag of mysteries, and went out into the compound; and waving these feathers in his hand, he imitated exactly the cries of a wounded crow. Previous to this not a bird was to be seen, but in a minute or two the sky was black with excited Indian crows, wheeling aloft and uttering piteous caws, probably in sympathy with their distressed comrade. I saw him do this ventriloquial trick on several subsequent occasions, and he never failed to draw together a flock of mourners.

In the afternoon I visited the Taj, to get the proportions of that magnificent pile duly settled in my mind before seeing it again by moonlight. Everything that can be written has been written from "Keene" down to "Mukarji," the compiler of the Agra guide-book, and I will not swell the list. I took my note-book, but felt that the subject was too sublime and awe-inspiring for mere journalistic notes. I will, however, give my idea of the best way to view this building. Go first in the daylight, and examine it thoroughly. Time your arrival in Agra to arrive at the time of the full-moon. After dinner drive out in the white flood of the Indian moonlight, which gives the dust-laden trees by the wayside the appearance of being covered with hoar-frost. Then go to the centre seat of the platform where the

tank is, and sit down facing the building till the moon rises over the trees on the right. Then in absolute silence, let the ineffable beauties of the structure sink into your soul, and as the moon rises it will define the glorious detail and harmonious beauty of the whole. In this way you will carry away a mental photograph, which will remain ineffaceable upon the retina of the brain, as long as the mind retains its inner consciousness. I should advise intending visitors to see the fort and Jehangir's palace first, and leave, like an epicure, the Taj for a final *bonne bouche*.

The next morning the Commissioner and I drove to the relief works, which are situated on the ground between the fort and the Taj Mahal. The work consists of levelling the very rough ground, deeply intersected with nullahs, which from time immemorial has been a sort of Tom Tiddler's ground. Over 20,000 people, the inhabitants of the city, were employed in beautifying this spot, for countless ages more or less the wash-pot and rubbish-receptacle of Agra. In the hot weather its condition used to be insufferable. Now the mounds have been cut away, and the valleys filled up, and it is the intention of the Commissioner to eventually lay it out as a people's park, in commemoration of the Empress's Jubilee—a truly beneficent object, and one which will be a standing memorial of the hard times of the year of grace 1897.

In the evening at dinner I sat next to Mr. Jacobs, the celebrated jeweller of Hyderabad diamond fame, whom Crawford has immortalized in his *Mr. Isaacs*. We had a long chat on Indian affairs, and I found him a mine of information concerning native manners, customs, and history.

I saw that a show was billed that night at the Institute, and so went to see it. It was a variety entertainment, with any amount of variety and very little entertainment. We started with a five-act drama, in which there were seventeen characters, and as the whole company was only five souls all told, the characters were not only doubled but quadrupled, except the funny man, who always remained the same, so the other parties of the troupe had their work cut out. Then followed a farce. Then a music-hall programme. I had sat it out for two hours and three-quarters, when a sergeant of artillery behind me could contain himself no longer, and while a lady was singing the "Rowdy Dowdy Boys," exclaimed, "For Gaud's sake, miss, chuck it, and let us all get home." This so exactly expressed my sentiments that, taking my courage in both hands, I fled and left them to it.

On the following morning I visited the poor-house, and found there some 300 odd of the flotsam and jetsam of the great city. The majority of them were professional beggars, whom the police had been able to sweep up in the purlieus of the native town, and quietly and unostentatiously confine within the precincts of the institution. This was, without doubt, a blessing for the rest of the inhabitants, but these mendicants rather kicked against the imposed restraint. In the afternoon I went to see a grand assault-at-arms given by the military of the district, under the direct patronage of Sir Bindon Blood, whose name has come into prominence lately in connection with the war going on against the frontier tribes of Northern India. I was very much struck with the excellence of the performance all round. The tent-pegging for officers was exceptionally good.

The Maharajah of Gwalior competed in this, but he was riding a very "beany" Arab, which, though a magnificent charger, yet wanted a little more training in this particular kind of sport. The brute "jinked" at the pegs, and so lost Scindia an opportunity of showing what a really first-class tent-pegger he is. The display of native horsemanship was quite unique, and the feats performed by the native cavalry (Beluchis and Rajputs) would have put a performance of Buffalo Bill's cowboys quite into the shade. At the conclusion we had a torchlight procession, and a Beluch dance, performed by Beluchis in their native war-paint. It was very weird and interesting.

That evening I went down to the Club, where I saw in the English papers my telegrams dispatched from Kholapur, Bijapur, and Sholapur. The next morning found me in the train for Delhi, where I arrived at 7.30 in the evening.

CHAPTER XXI

DELHI

ON leaving Agra we passed over the Jumna railway-bridge. This construction contrives a double debt to pay, as like the bridge at Allahabad the rail runs underneath, while above is a road for carts: though in the case of Allahabad the position of the tracks is reversed. The view of the Taj from the river-side is very fine, as too is the fort with the golden pavilion of Jehangir gleaming in the sun; and the setting of the water enhances the beauty of the structures. All along the line, from Agra to Aligarh, cultivation is carried on by means of *cutcha* wells. There are an enormous number, one to nearly every field, and the peasants were hard at work supplying water to the crops. From Cholla to Delhi, which is within the sphere of the irrigation scheme of the North-West, and supplied by the great Jumna canal, the crops were excellent. I saw here for the first time a primitive method of raising water from a lower to a higher level. Two men stand on each side of what I may call a dipping-hole, holding in each hand a string, to which is attached a basket. With a rhythmical swing they dip all four baskets into the water simultaneously, and pulling on the ropes heave the water into a reservoir above. They can raise the water in this way some eight or ten feet, and such is their precision

that they keep up an almost continual stream. It argues long practice, as they never seemed to miss their tips; and I heard that an enormous amount of water could be raised in a day by a quartette of skilful workers.

Never did the fertilizing power of water become so evident to me as when passing through this district, which the hand of man and human ingenuity had converted from a howling wilderness into a smiling and bountiful grain-growing country. It is marvellous what British occupation and British engineering skill have done for this portion of India. A study of the map of the Irrigation Department of the North-West, which I had an opportunity of seeing at Lucknow, showed a bewildering net-work of canals and off-sets, which owed their birth and origin to European skilled industry and organization. The ramifications of this vast project go on increasing yearly, and one result of the famine of '97 will be several very important additions to the irrigation of the Punjaub and the North-West Provinces. I shall touch upon these undertakings in their proper place. In the meanwhile, in the gathering darkness, I approached the famous city of Delhi.

Delhi is full of memories of the past, and ought by right to be the seat of the Government. For countless ages Delhi has been imbued with the divinity of royalty, and it is without doubt a meet and fitting site for the representative of our Queen-Empress to pitch his tents, when business calls him and his attendant train from the pleasant hills of Simla. But I am writing anent famine, not Indian history.

According to my wont, I paid my respects to the Commissioner, whom I found at home. Mr. Clarke is a

pleasant and genial Irishman, and one who has the working of his division well under his grasp. He did not own to much famine in his jurisdiction, except in the Hissar district. All irrigated lands would produce a twelve-anna crop, although they had no rain for the past four months. The sub-divisions of Delhi, Gurgaon, Rohtak, and Koornoul had a certain amount of irrigation, and the famine would not be severe, as there were only about 3000 in each circle on the relief works. Government had wisely sanctioned all works asked for by the Commissioner. The Ghaggar canal had been on the *tapis* for the last twenty years, and it was now to be carried through. Another work to be undertaken was the re-alignment of the Hansi branch of the Jumna canal, and this would provide labour for 20,000 souls for six months. I mentioned to Mr. Clarke my idea of going to Hissar, and so on to Sirsa. He very kindly said that he would write to Captain Dunlop Smith, the Assistant-Commissioner, who would make all necessary arrangements for me. He also added that it was a most out-of-the-way place, and that if I went down in a haphazard way I should be stranded. I therefore gladly accepted his proposal, and said I would wait in Delhi till he got a reply to his letter.

I was much struck with the various types which one meets here. One is naturally quite familiar with the ordinary specimen of the Delhi "box-wallah," whom one sees wherever the European *memsahib*, their chief supporter, likes to congregate; but the Punjaubi is quite a different creature from the native of Bombay or the Bengalee Babu. On leaving the Commissioner, I went on a voyage of discovery, with a view to investigating the extent of the pressure and scarcity felt in the royal city

of Delhi itself. First and foremost, I had myself conveyed in one of those fearful and wonderful *gharries*, which seem to be a special feature of Northern India, to the public kitchen. These vehicles resemble nothing so much as a bathing machine on wheels, and will guarantee to excite into lively action the most torpid liver. They rattle ten times worse than the most dilapidated and ancient growler of our London streets, and can give many points in the matter of discomfort to any other known vehicle of the civilized world. I had immense difficulty in getting my Jehu (Jehu only in name, as he had none of the noted qualities of the son of Nimshi) to take me to the public kitchen. I tried him with *dukhankhana*,[1] then *Garrib logue ke-passe*,[2] but he stolidly denied all knowledge of such a place, thing or people, till at last I was obliged to invoke the assistance of a spotlessly-clad Delhian, who started us on the right track. After jolting about through the fashionable quarter of the town, we at length got into the slums, and after innumerable twistings and turnings through the narrow and squalid streets of the worst part of the native bazaar, we at length emerged at the Kabulee-gate, without which lay the object of my quest. This kitchen had been started some three months; and a daily feed of chuppaties and curry and rice is given to some thousand people, who come duly furnished with a proper ticket. It is in the hands of the Municipal Committee, and seemed to be fairly well managed, the expenses averaging a little over 300 rupees weekly. I arrived there about noon, and though the feast is not advertised to begin before two o'clock, yet several hundred would-be guests were already sitting in the compound, awaiting

[1] Feeding-place. [2] Poor folks' place.



HUNGRY AND HELPLESS.

with sublime oriental patience the due distribution of the daily dole. There were two kitchens, one for the Hindoos and Mahommedans respectively, and a posse of *chefs* were busily preparing for the coming civic banquet. After going my rounds, I went on to see a small relief work which was being carried on near the Cashmere-gate. There were some thousand people filling up a nullah and levelling the ground. This will be of future benefit to the golfers of Delhi, as this piece of ground constituted a formidable bunker to the wielder of the "niblick," and lay right in the centre of the newly-started links.

I had heard previously to my arrival in Delhi that the art-workers of the place were feeling the pinch of poverty, and that Mrs. Flora Steele's letter to the *Times* of the 1st of January fairly represented the state of the case. Mr. Clarke had told me that in response to this letter he had received several orders for embroidery from England, and that he was able to do great good with the money thus placed at his disposal. A great crux was the almost unsurmountable pride of the poor of Delhi; and many instances had been found amongst the Jains, who tried to keep up a brave appearance abroad, while in their homes there was the direst distress, which their notions of family pride prevented them from making public by applying for State aid. There was a regular organization of a native and European committee to inquire into and quietly alleviate the necessities of these poor people. Another section of the community that were feeling the pinch were the scions and offshoots of the ancient royal house of Delhi. There are some three to four hundred of these offspring of nobility still existing. They are in receipt of a small pension from the Government; but in this time of high prices they

found that the State allowance was totally inadequate to provide them with the barest means of subsistence. Additional money grants were being given to these poor and deserving remnants of a departed royal dynasty.

It is the bounden duty of a newspaper man to believe nothing he hears, and only about half of what is shown him. I thought I would pursue the investigations personally. For this purpose I engaged the services of Bapuru, the celebrated Delhi guide, whose father did such good service to the British during the Mutiny; and gave him explicit instructions that I wanted to investigate the conditions of the *kinkob*[1] workers in the bazaar. The Brahmins had lately published an edict prohibiting any Hindoo weddings, as the year was an unpropitious one. This had had a disastrous effect upon the wire-drawers and embroiderers of Delhi, as the lack of a demand for wedding garments had to a very large extent stopped their means of subsistence. In accordance then with the plan above stated, I first drove to the Chandi Chowk, which is the principal street in Delhi, and where the larger purveyors of Indian merchandise and goods have their shops. I first went to the shop of Ram Chand Hazari Mal, who keeps on the premises some forty or fifty workmen. There I saw a few men at work, doing the most delicate embroidery for d'oyleys and dinner-table slips. The proprietor, however, told me that his orders for goods had fallen off considerably in the last six months, and lamented his lack of custom. He pointed to several empty places in his workshop, and said that the men had been obliged to give up the struggle against hard times, and had gone on the relief works.

[1] Gold embroidery.

Fancy these poor effeminate, delicate and nimble-fingered gold-workers obliged to handle the rough *khodalie* in search of their daily bread. I then went into various works in different parts of the bazaar, and very queer places they were too. The slums of Delhi are of a kind peculiar to themselves. I found many of the places deserted, and in some only a few workers. I then told Bapuru I wanted to go and see a real native jeweller, not a man who made goods to sell to Europeans, but one who worked exclusively for a native *clientèle* of rajahs and rich natives. Leaving the carriage in the Chowk, we dived into a labyrinth of narrow passages, and eventually brought up before a steep wooden stair. Mounting this, I found myself in a low-pitched room, and on a divan at the far end reclined a portly Hindoo. He was, I think, a Jain, and wore the spotless muslin clothes and low, flat white turban peculiar to the inhabitants of Delhi. On my entering he rose, salaamed, and invited me to take a seat on the divan. I told him that I wished to inspect some jewellery of native manufacture, and he bowed solemnly. After a due pause—an oriental is never in a hurry—he signed to his attendants, and they brought in two or three common steel trunks. By this time quite a crowd had assembled in the room, and were squatting in solemn silence on the floor facing me, and watching every movement with the deepest interest. Then began a display of jewellery which increased in splendour and magnificence as time went on. I was first shown a necklace of pearls and uncut emeralds, the latter being some of them larger than hazel nuts. The price of this was 20,000 rupees. Then followed another of diamonds, cat's-eyes and pearls (30,000), with an aigrette in the same style for a similar amount. Another necklace

was priced at half a lac, and another of Benares work with diamonds, at 70,000. There were also rings bracelets, armlets, nose-rings, bangles—in fact, every conceivable ornament that native feminine frivolity could wear or hanker after. One very curious specimen was a pair of gloves. These were made of delicate gold scale-work, with a handsome ring for each finger-joint and terminating in a splendid bangle; the whole lavishly set with precious stones. The pair were offered to me for three-quarters of a lac of rupees. These no doubt will some day deck the dusky hands of some powerful favourite wife of an Indian potentate, It would be tedious to recount all the wonderful things I saw, but here in this sordid two-pair back was accumulated so much wealth that if a poor journalist could have successfully looted the place, he need never have put pen to paper to earn a crust again.

This prince of dealers in precious stones knew full well that I was not a purchaser, and yet, with stately courtesy, brought out his most precious wares to gratify my idle curiosity.

I was much pleased with the whole show, and expressing my thanks to the proprietor crept down the dark stair into the glare of the Indian sun. The whole scene was like some enchanted fairy tale, and might have been taken bodily from the *Arabian Nights.*

In the afternoon I of course visited the Ridge, and saw all the places and the landmarks of the memorable siege. When I got back to the hotel, I found a note from Mr. Clarke, inviting me to dinner the next evening, and saying that he expected to have a reply from Hissar by that time. All my racketing about for the last month had brought on an attack of my old enemy

rheumatism, and I determined to take a Turkish bath, as I heard that such a luxury was procurable in Delhi. I told my "guide, philosopher and friend" Baparu, and he said that he would see the proprietor of the *Hammam*, and make all arrangements. The next morning I therefore set off, taking the Jumna Musjid mosque on the way. In spite of aches and pains, I climbed the steep stair of one of the tall minarets which flank its four quarters, and the view from the top well repaid the toil. Delhi lay like a picture beneath me, and as I gazed over the city, Rudyard Kipling's description of the "City of Dreadful Night" crept into my mind, and I recalled his description of the scene. One could see in the mind's eye the countless mass of seething humanity below, and one shuddered to think of the misery which these masses must endure in the awful breathless nights of the hot weather.

I found the bath in a back street, and the obsequious Mahommedan proprieter bowing lowly told me all was prepared for "his Honour's" service. When I had been in the hot room, which was only very dimly lighted by a small glass dome, two nude muscular Mussulmans appeared. They seized my helpless body, and then began such a thumping and rubbing and kneading of my muscles and limbs, that I thought they would pull me to pieces. They insisted on making every one of my joints crack. And the climax was reached when the burlier of the two placed his knees in the small of my back, and twisted my shoulders round till my poor back-bone went off like a pistol-shot. Then clapping the hollow of his hand upon his biceps, and producing a similar sound (in the same way as native wrestlers do before engaging in the grip), he muttered with a guttural laugh,

"*Bahut atcha huzoor bolta*" ("Very good lord protector of the poor, it has spoken").

When I emerged, clothed and another man, into the reception-room, the proprietor asked me to write him a testimonial in his visitor's book. Looking at the names inscribed, I found there several of the prominent and popular jockeys of India. As the Sky Races were on in Delhi, they had evidently taken advantage of this method of wasting. I went to the races in the afternoon, and met a lot of my racing friends from Bombay. At the Commissioner's that evening, he told me that he had heard from Dunlop Smith of Hissar, and that he would put me up and make all arrangements for my getting on to Sirsa, if I would let him know the probable time of my arrival. I met that evening Mr. Symes, the Director of Public Education for the Punjaub, and I told him I would look him up at Lahore, if he had got back to head-quarters from his tour of inspection by the time I arrived there. We played at word-puzzles in the evening, and as a parting gift I left Mr. Clarke, Charles Collette's "Cryptoconchoidsyphonostomata" to decipher! I hope he found it out, but I have it on my conscience that it might be another case of Mark Twain's "Punch, brothers, Punch." The next day I wired to Captain Dunlop Smith, saying I would arrive the following morning, at four o'clock, at Hissar. There is only one train a day available, and this lands you at your destination at that unearthly hour of the morning.

In Indian travelling you cannot do otherwise than follow the time-table, and at some wayside stations it gets you in and out at very impracticable hours.

CHAPTER XXII

HISSAR

WHEN the united efforts of the guard and my boy had succeeded in dislodging me from the train, I found myself, in the dark, cold, raw morning, on the platform of the Hissar station. Mr. Butler, the *Stunt Sahib*, had very kindly come to meet me and conduct me to the Assistant-Commissioner's bungalow. Mr. Butler had only recently joined the service, and was one of the University candidates under the new scheme. At Cambridge he took a double-first in the tripos, obtained a fellowship at his college, and then turned his attention to the Indian Civil Service, into which he passed very high. This young man has made an excellent start, and achieved, in what one may call his salad days, no mean record. It is another instance of heredity, as he is a nephew (I believe) of Dr. Butler of Trinity.

We arrived at the bungalow in due course, and as it was still pitch dark, I turned in to finish my broken night's rest. Some few hours later I met my host, Captain Dunlop Smith, and his wife at breakfast. The first project of the day's work was to drive to the *cutcherry* and office of the Commissioner. Though it was a public holiday under the Act, yet Dunlop Smith had arranged for his head *karkoon* to be there for a

couple of hours to give me any details, figures, etc. I might require. The area of the Hissar district is over 5000 square miles, and has a population of seven lacs and three-quarters (to be more accurate, according to the last census, 776,006). The actual number of people employed on the various public works was just below 60,000, but it was expected that this number would be doubled before the rains. The condition of the whole circle was very critical, as last year there had been absolutely no crops, except in a very small area on the canal in the Hansi and Hissar *tahsils*. In fact, in the latter *tahsil*, the average crop for the last three years, on the area sown, had only reached twenty-three per cent.

There was no food-supply in the country, and fodder was being imported for the few cattle that still existed, but this was only being done by the wealthier zemindars. There had been an enormous amount of cow-killing in the district, for the mere sake of the horns and hides, and this had caused considerable friction between the Hindoo and Mahommedan sections of the community; in fact, there had already been one or two minor riots and beatings, between these two classes, which had been more or less suppressed, and there was a very distinct undercurrent of feeling prevailing amongst the bigoted and zealous Hindoos. This required very careful watching on the part of the Commissioner, and added to his already very onerous labours. Captain Dunlop Smith is absolutely Prussian in his minute and careful methods of organization. In fact, he was treating the famine in his district as a campaign or a game of "Kriegspiel." One wall of his office at the *cutcherry* was covered with an enormous map of the whole circle under his



A COMPANY OF THE PROPHETS.

jurisdiction, every particle of relief work going on, whether it were canals, walls, roads or tanks, being accurately marked. By an ingenious system of coloured flags, which indicated certain numbers, he was able to tell at a glance how many workers there were at work at any particular place. When the daily reports came in these were checked and verified, and one could stand before the map, when one had mastered the colours, etc., and tell at a glance what was being carried on and where it was, what sort of work and how many working.

I obtained from the *karkoon* one valuable bit of information, the result of his researches into the prices of food-stuffs in the Hissar district, of the famines of note during the last century. In the Chalisa famine of 1783, the whole country was depopulated, but since that, in other periods of scarcity, the price of food has always ruled higher than in 1896-97, as the subjoined table will show.

Description.	1783.	1860–1. Seers.[1]	1869–70. Seers. Ch.[2]	1877–78. Seers.	1896–97.
Wheat ...	It is recorded that *atta* sold at 5-6 seers to the rupee.	9	9·6	13½	7
Barley ...		14	12·8	20	7
Granir ...		12	13·8	21	9
Jowari ...		11	10·8	20	10
Bajri ...		12	10·4	17½	8
Noth ...		—	10·8	22	—
Ming ...		—	10·8	20	—

These figures are fairly conclusive of the severity of

[1] A seer = 2 lbs. English nearly. [2] Chattak.

distress and scarcity in Hissar and the surrounding country.

As we were coming back from the court-house, the Commissioner pointed out to me a few frameworks of cattle on the wayside; they were absolutely burrowing in the ground, like pigs, to get at the roots. The mortality has been enormous amongst the flocks and herds, as over two-thirds of the animals in the district have either died of starvation or been slaughtered. Hissar in ordinary times is an excellent grazing and pasture land, and one of the features of the place is the Bir, whose perimeter is some forty miles. It is a Government farm for the breeding and raising of draught-oxen for military transport purposes. In good years this spot is one of the finest grazing grounds in India; but in the course of a long ride I took with the Commissioner, scarcely a blade of grass was to be seen. He told me that the greater part of the store cattle had been deported to other places, and that the few that remained were being stall-fed at a ruinous expense. The probable cost of the famine in Hissar was estimated to amount to about five lacs of rupees, and of this sum a lac and a half had been spent up to date. One of the great questions to deal with in these parts was the enormous transfer of land that was going on. The mortgaging of land in the *tahsil* had increased more than three hundred per cent., and all the registrars were clamorous for more help to meet the increased demand upon their time and work. The land was going into the hands of the *bannias*, so that the peasant-proprietor, the mainstay and chief prop of agricultural India, has been reduced to the status of a mere village hind, dependent on the will of the *bannia*.

I cull the following facts from the report of the Assistant-Commissioner for the week ending February 20, 1897—

"Canal crops developing fairly; rain urgently wanted. From Sirsa the prospects of irrigated lands reported poor. Hissar only fair, Hansi good. *Salalia* crop[1] in Sirsa and Falebad, very poor. Number of relief works, twenty-four. Tanks started all over district where proper supervision can be obtained. Rise of prices in food-stuffs, owing to slackening of Scinde imports, and stores of grain thrown on the market, owing to bankruptcy of several *bannias*, have now been exhausted. Mortality of cattle increasing, and will continue."

Captain Dunlop Smith, in writing to his chief about the famine in his report, thus touches upon the land question—

"The large number of villages and zemindaries owned in this district by wealthy mortgagors of the money-lending class, is a melancholy heritage of past famines. On inquiring into the history of such villages, it is found almost invariably that the mortgagor or his ancestors acquired the proprietary rights of the villages at a time like the present. Now-a-days, fortunately, the administration of the revenue is carried on more sympathetically, and wholesale transfers of villages to the highest bidder, under express orders of Government, are now impossible. At the same time, the unfettered power of alienation the peasant-proprietor possesses, brings about very much the same results, when the scarcity is as acute as it is now. I conclude that there can be no worthier object to which sums at your disposal

[1] Casual irrigation by overflow streams.

may be applied than to the redemption of such mortgages as may have been caused by actual want. But the redemption of mortgages will not be a difficult matter. I know from an experience of years how utterly the land-owning classes feel the yoke of mortgage, which they rarely shake off. They know that this system of free power to alienate is a creation of the English rule, and no measure would be more effective in itself, or would make a more lasting impression, than the devotion of a large sum, which in the main has been raised by people in England, to the restoration of their lands to families who have parted with them from no fault of their own."

There is too another point, which I may here touch upon, and which has a very important bearing upon the question raised by the Commissioner in the extract I have quoted above.

In the majority of the villages owned by the wealthy *bannia* mortgagors, the greater part of the borrowers were quite unable to pay their rent. The sums have been recorded in the landlords' books, and are gathering interest daily. It would too be an excellent thing if some part of the relief fund were assigned to the liquidation of these debts, and would tend much to free the peasants from the cumulative pressing burden of debt. I think, however, that the latter question is not of such paramount importance as the former—that is, the redemption of the mortgaged lands of India's sheet-anchor, the peasant-proprietor. Hissar, apart from the part it played in the present famine, is a country full of interesting historical reminiscences. It is the scene of the exploits of "the Adventurers," chief amongst whom figure the names of Bernier, Skinner, and George Thomas,

who, originally a sailor, left his profession and attained a position of eminence in the country. Bernier's descendants still own a considerable quantity of land round Hansi, while the Skinner estates are at Dhunoor in the neighbourhood of the Ghaggar canal, of which I shall have more to say hereafter. These men played a prominent part in the wars between Scindia and Holkar. When Scindia fought the British in 1803, Skinner, with the other Englishmen in the service of the Maharajah, was dismissed, and sided with the British. Subsequently he became a Colonel and C.B. Skinner's Horse, which he raised and commanded, were a notable body of native cavalry, and rejoiced in the pseudonym of the "Yellow Boys." Before his death he built at his own expense the church at Delhi, which is an exact imitation in miniature of Wren's masterpiece, St. Paul's Cathedral. One of his sons did good service by holding Hansi for the British during the troublous times of the Mutiny. Two of his grandsons are still living at Hansi, and they can show you many relics of this extraordinary man. One is a poor horn spoon of the rudest workmanship, which even in the days of his greatest prosperity, and when he was surrounded with all the pomp, splendour and circumstance of an Indian Nawab, was invariably laid at his side at table. He used to say that it was an unfailing reminder of his early days of poverty, and would help him not to forget his humbler origin in the midst of his present magnificence. One has heard of the eminent millionaire railway contractor who in after years religiously preserved the tools of his earlier working days, when he toiled as a mere navvy. The cases are almost identical, and it is of peculiar significance that these two men, whose careers pointed to rare examples of energy

and industry, should be fired with the same laudable ambition of striving not to forget the humbler beginnings from which they sprang into wealth and social prominence.

Taken as a whole, the district of Hissar is well worthy of a visit, as it is off the beaten track of Indian travellers, and yet presents features which are very dissimilar to other well-worn routes.

CHAPTER XXIII

SIRSA AND THE GHAGGAR CANAL

THE main and chief object of going to Sirsa was to visit the large works which were established at Dhunoor, in this neighbourhood. Captain Dunlop Smith had written to his assistant at Sirsa, and told me that he had heard from Mr. Hamilton that arrangements were being made for me to go on to Ghaggar the next morning. I was accordingly obliged to get down to Sirsa that evening, and in company with Mr. Butler we started the same evening, and after a run of some two and a half hours by rail, landed at Sirsa. I was most courteously received by Mr. Hamilton, the sub-divisional officer, who placed himself and his house at my disposal.

A word of digression here upon the truly remarkable kindness and hospitality with which I was everywhere received. On starting I was fully impressed with the notion by various friends that a meddlesome, troublesome pressman, dodging and "speiring" about, and asking all sorts of uncomfortable questions, would certainly and assuredly be looked upon somewhat askance. The fact of "a chiel amang ye takin' notes, and faith he'll prent it," would be—so said my own familiar friends—quite sufficient for the turning of the cold shoulder. My friends, however, were entirely and completely

wrong. It is always satisfactory to prove other people wrong, and I am happy to say that the treatment I received from everybody I met was most kind and courteous; and most of them went out of their way—and often a long way—to give me information and the most valuable assistance. In fact, had it not been for the courtesy and kindness of the various officials whom I came across, and their valuable help, I could never have got over the ground I did traverse, or have seen in the time half what I saw. Like the fiery cross of Scotland, I was rapidly passed on from hand to hand, and thus able to collect my news far more rapidly than if I had been left to my own sweet self, to find out what I could. Let me, however, get back to famine tracking.

Sirsa, which borders on the native State of Bikanir, is an appanage of the Hissar circle. It has certainly a most arid and sterile appearance, and it looks as if Dame Nature, in taking out her quantities for the construction of India, had made a wrong calculation, and dumped her surplus sand down in these parts. There are only twenty-one miles of *pucca* roads in the whole district, and the chief means of progression is the "bubbling snaky-headed *oont*." Even these hardy creatures, who I believe live on babul thorns for choice, were feeling the scarcity of fodder—or thorns—in the district. My host, after we had enjoyed a bit of a symposium round a cheerful wood-fire, told me that he had made all arrangements to go to Dhunoor the next morning as soon as we liked, and that camels, ponies, etc. had been provided. I went to bed and dreamed of wild and unstoppable camels bolting with me over the vast plain. What was my surprise the next morning to hear outside my window the rattling

of harness and the champing of bits; and on looking out, lo, there was a wagonette drawn up with a pair of fiery, untamed steeds of the Ukraine, or any other breed. They were, in fact, a pair of snow-white country-breds, and though showy did not look to me as if they really liked or wanted hard work.

In due course Butler and I got off, with our red-coated *chupprassie* on the box, with the driver, and the *syce* standing and hanging on behind. Oh, that drive! We had about two of the twenty-one miles of *pucca* road in the district, and then got into a real old sand-bank. Our method of progression was to go for about 300 yards, quite twelve annas, and then a dead stop, while both animals jibbed for all they were worth. Our duty was, while the coachman held the reins and the *syce* lugged at the horses' heads, to nip down and push the wheels—when after a certain interval, which lengthened the further we went, the horses suddenly bolted off without any warning, and we had to scramble in at the back as best we could. And so *da capo* at frequent intervals, till the bungalow at Dhunoor hove in sight, and our first stage of the pilgrimage was at an end. We had taken nearly three hours to do the ten miles which lay between the city of Sirsa and the canal bungalow at Dhunoor. Here we were met by the engineers in charge, and I found that a steady old weight-carrier of the equine race and the Arab persuasion had been provided for my sole use and benefit, so that all the terrors I had gone through in anticipation of mounting "the humming-bird of the desert" vanished into thin air.

On the way up to Dhunoor we passed several villages, but they were practically deserted, the inhabitants being on the canal works. The Ghaggar canal is to be the

scientific storage and distribution of the flood-water of the Ghaggar river, which, as many people know, is the purling stream which in the earlier days, before the establishment of the *pucca* Kalka-Simla road, had to be negotiated on elephant-back, when *en route* for that elysium of the hills. Practical engineering has bridged the obstacle, and now no portage is necessary, and the tonga takes you up without interruption. This river, after coming down from the Himalayas in a gushing flood at the time of the melting snows, eventually loses itself in the sands of Sirsa. The Dhunoor lake will form the head-water and catchment area, and the fructifying liquid is to be distributed by two branches—the northern and southern canal—to the extreme frontier of British territory, and then the canal will be carried on into dry and dusty Bikanir, some forty miles in all.

There were some 40,000 souls upon the work, and the scene as we rode up was a gay and busy one. On the left were some 3000 people busily making an enormous flood-water embankment, which is to be seventeen feet high to the top, and extends across the valley of Ghaggar about two miles in a southerly direction. Within this is to be constructed a weir, which will contain 180,000 cubic feet of brick-work, and will employ daily 500 masons. This had to be finished by the end of May to catch the early floods, and the engineers were very anxious that they should not be caught by the flood-water ere the dam was completed. This weir is the only piece of skilled labour that will be employed upon the whole work, the rest of the digging and earth-work having been admirably performed under due surveillance by mere famine coolie hands. It is astonishing how well a native will work at anything in which he

takes a real interest, and which is likely to be of some permanent good to him and his descendants. Any portion of irrigation work is always cheerfully undertaken, and performed more in the light of a religious exercise than a mere manual task. The native fully understands the benefit likely to accrue from work of this description, and does not look upon it in the light of "Love's labour lost," as he does in the case of constructing *cutcha* roads which he won't use, and which experience tells him the elements will soon make sport of.

We rode down the southern branch some four or five miles, and inspected the various gangs at work, and the camps, which are situated two miles apart all down the alignment. We came upon a gang being paid, and alighted from our steeds to inspect. They were squatting round the cashier and the *naib-tahsildar*, who were seated on their kibes before a sheet spread with piled heaps of silver and copper money. The majesty of the law was represented by a truculent-looking sepoy, who stood with drawn sword guarding the treasure like the angel at the gate of ancient Eden, except that here no Eve seemed inclined to break in and steal. The workers came up meekly when their names were called, and took their *panch-pies*, or whatever they had earned, with a deep salaam to the *huzoors* grouped around, and silently and uncomplainingly departed. It was a pleasant sight, and among the toilers the merry jest and laugh went round, and they all seemed as jolly as sandboys. I regret to say, however, that quite inadvertently I disturbed the harmony at one place of a group of women who were levelling the top of the canal-bank. It was a picturesque group; and producing a *kodak* I

was about to take a snap-shot, when lo! and behold, they fled *en masse*, and vanished as the mists at daybreak. Whether they thought it was *shaitan* or no I cannot say, but afterwards I had to be more circumspect, as they were evidently under the impression that I was casting over them dread spells of magic. We then went on to see the camp shops, etc. The Government had here departed from their usual plan, and had erected splendid *mandaps* of *sirki-* (elephant-) grass for the dwellers in the plain. They found, however, that the aborigines would have none of these palatial edifices, and so afterwards each family was given a grass mat or two, and allowed to erect their own shelters.

When we were strolling about the camp, a man came and prostrated himself; he was girt only with a linen cloth about his loins, and seizing the feet of the engineer-in-chief, implored him for clothing. The "boss" regarded the man silently, and then said quietly in English to the rest of us, "I am sure I gave that man a blanket yesterday. I remember his face." He said to his colleagues, "Go off with a *chowkidar* and search his tent." In the meantime he kept the suppliant in conversation, listening most attentively and sympathetically to his tale of woe. In a minute or two the search-party returned, and the result of the *shikar* was a bran-new blanket, a very good wadded coat in an excellent state of preservation, and a pair of wadded pantaloons. When the would-be receiver of additional clothing saw these garments he fled, and the chief, with a smile, turned to me and said, "You see it does not do to believe everything one hears, and yet they talk of the *zubberdustie* and harshness of us poor public-works men."

The work at Ghaggar is of the most satisfactory nature,

and the out-turn is about the highest that has ever been recorded for earth-work of this kind done by famine coolies. It is, of course, quite patent that famine work costs many times more than the usual system of petty contract work, but here at Ghaggar it worked out to only about double the price. This is distinctly a feather in the caps of the Public Works Department in whose hands the work is. In fact, Messrs. Floyd and Wakefield have achieved a great work and an enviable reputation for the way in which, in face of great difficulties, they successfully managed this big irrigation scheme. In other parts of India the cost of the work as compared with the out-turn is four and even five times more expensive.

We then rode on to the northern branch, where an exactly similar state of affairs prevail. As we were riding over the plain I said to Mr. Wakefield, "Where is the exact bed of the river Ghaggar?" "Well," he said, "you are as nearly as possible in the centre of the stream now." It was a dry, sandy desert with a great many boulders scattered about, and here and there straggling patches of *maccai* stalks, but not at all my idea of a river. "Yet in about three months from now this whole valley will be one mass of water, and it is to restrain this that we are doing all this work."

He then in the course of conversation said—"A curious thing happened here last week. We had a very heavy thunderstorm, and during it a group of five women, who were squatted down over there, were struck by lightning, but none of them killed. I will show you a couple of them in the hospital. Floyd and I, too, had a narrow squeak, as that tree that you see by our tent there was struck, and we both rushed out at the crash."

In the hospital I saw these victims of the elements; they were both paralyzed, and their bodies and arms scarred and burnt. The doctor said he thought they would pull round, but it was doubtful whether one of the poor creatures would ever regain the use of her limbs.

In the first camp I saw, an instance of the danger of the system of elaborate hutting of the camps was shown me. A couple of days before one of these large *mandaps* had caught fire; and a boy of some eleven years (a cripple) was burnt to death before he could be rescued. Our inspection of the works being over, we rode back to Dhunoor proper, and after being hospitably lunched by the Engineers, started for home, *i.e.* my present lodging at Sirsa.

On the homeward route our horses began the same old game, but I could not stand the native coachman any longer, so pulled him off his box and assumed the reins. Whether it was my bamboo-stick, which I kept going like a flail, or my sweet voice, with which I encouraged them with a series of wild Irish yells, that startled them out of their sedateness, or rather sit-downedness, I do not know. The brutes broke into a wild canter of some eight miles an hour, and at this I kept them going till we drew up at our cottage-door, seventy minutes after the start, by the Assistant-Commissioner's chronograph, and I have a paper signed to that effect by the two witnesses inside. The passengers in the "convanience" were a bit nervous, and I remarked to my trembling friends, "Sand's mighty soft and aisy fallin', so sit tight, boys." Those milk-white, pink-eyed steeds were done to a turn when we got home, but the red *chupprassie* smiled a grim approval,

and the respect of the *syce* and driver for the "*lat coach wan sahib*" was much enhanced. When we touched upon the question of *baksheesh*, I suggested they ought to give me money, instead of the opposite course of proceeding. The driver said—"Ah, sahib, these horses are devils, but the huzoor sahib is a giant, and has beaten his enemies." I fear, as far as I can remember, that the fulsome flattery fetched me, and I parted with hard-earned shekels to these obsequious but diplomatic horse-keepers.

We had had a really long and tiring day, and as the next day was the blessed Sabbath, I determined to lie up and devote it to getting off my telegram for London. After working the next day at my wire, I went off in the afternoon to the post-office, some two miles away, and handed in my copy to the Babu, showing him my authority, and telling him to send it off at once.

We, Butler and I, then strolled about the native town, visited the poor-house, and saw what there was to be seen. I had got to the bungalow, when in came the pale and perspiring post-master. He said, "Sahib, the people at Delhi won't take your telegram; what can do?" Reaching for my forms I wrote out an urgent message to the Director-General at Calcutta. It was in full, and in the form of an official letter beginning, "Honoured sir," and finishing up with, "I have the honour to be, sir, Your most humble and obedient servant," etc.

In this I expatiated upon the folly of the Babu clerk in Delhi, flying in the face of the orders of his chief in Calcutta, requesting that the amount of this wire might be refunded to my firm, and expressing a hope that the Babu at Delhi would be made to pay the piper.

This totted up to about fifty or sixty rupees, and giving this to the post-master, told him to send it at once. The cream of the joke was, that the unfortunate operator at Delhi would have to pass this message through himself. Two hours later I got a chit from the post-master, saying my wire had gone through. I was particularly annoyed at the delay, as I was very anxious that my experiences should appear in the early Monday morning editions of the English journals.

The next morning I took the train for Lahore, and I shall never forget that memorable journey. No sooner had we started than a dust-storm arose, and we were enveloped in this for seven mortal hours, during which the train slowly panted, wheezed, and croaked along till we reached Ferozepur, where it turned into rain. It was so dark in the carriages that one could not even see to read, and before the journey ended the whole of the cushions, floor, etc. were covered with about two inches of sand. Of course everything was apparently hermetically sealed, and yet through every hidden chink and unperceived cranny the blinding, choking sand drove in. It was very curious to see the objects we passed looming through the darkness of the storm. This, like a London "particular," has the peculiarity of magnifying objects, and a caravan of camels, which we passed struggling along the road, assumed the most weird and fantastic shapes, and looked more like the denizens of a prehistoric age than the patient but long-suffering ships of the desert.

We halted at a place called Bhatinda for tiffen, and dashed across the platform to the refreshment-room. The curry and rice, however, was more than three-parts sand, and even the whisky-peg when drained had a

deep sediment at the bottom of the glass. I am morally convinced that in those seven dreary hours I consumed my whole allotted peck, and ought to be absolved from the ignoble proceeding of eating dirt for the rest of my natural life. I began to feel that I was enduring a similar fate to that which overtook the better half of the old patriarch Lot, except that I was a pillar of mere clay, and by the time I reached Ferozepur felt that there was not enough liquid to be found in that part of the world to sufficiently moisten the aforesaid clay.

The longest day ends at last, and nearly four hours late I turned up, about eleven o'clock at night, in Lahore, the capital of the Punjaub.

NOTE.—In Appendix B will be found the official report of the Ghaggar canal, and an account of the special visit paid by Sir Dennis Fitzpatrick to these works.


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CHAPTER XXIV

LAHORE

LAHORE is a municipal city and the capital of the Punjaub. It is the head-quarters of the Lieutenant-Governor, and also the high officials have their head-offices located here. The "Mall," which is the principal thoroughfare, and round which the chief offices and shops cluster, is a fine, broad road, with shady trees on each side. The houses and buildings generally are fine, and the whole place gives you a sort of Brighton-by-the-Sea effect, if we substitute the sandy expanse for the blue and ever-changing ocean.

On my arrival at the capital I found the place all agog, paying due respect and honour to the retiring Lieutenant-Governor, Sir Dennis Fitzpatrick. The place was redolent of rajahs, anxious to welcome and speed the parting governor. *Le roi est mort, vive le roi*, was the programme of the day and night during the week. It was impossible to stir out of doors without coming across the gay pageant of some Punjaubi potentate, with his glittering array of accompanying body-guard. The processions consisted of a string of carriages, which decrease in splendour from the highly-polished and electro-plated barouche of the king himself, till you get down to the common hired third-class *ticcagharry*, which conveys his *chobdars* (pipe-bearers) and silver-sticks in waiting.



A STREET IN LAHORE.

The air was thick with the smoke of incessant salutes, and all day long one heard the guns continuously booming. I, too, paid my state visits to the Maharajahs of Patiala and Kapurthala, but did not attempt to see the retiring Governor, as I knew his time would be more profitably occupied than in granting me an interview. Both Patiala and Kapurthala told me that there was comparatively little famine within their districts, and that it was only a few of the hill-tribes who were affected, but that there was plenty of food-supply in the plains for all needs. Both princes most courteously invited me to visit their kingdoms, but as time was flying I was, much to my regret, obliged to plead more important business in the North-West. I called, too, upon Mr. Fenton, the Revenue Secretary of Government. He most kindly gave me every assistance, and placed a series of all the public reports in my hands. I told him that I was very anxious to get up to the Jhelum canal-works by Lala Musa, and he most courteously said he would telegraph to Captain Douglas, who was in charge of the works, and tell him I was coming up to see him and his charge.

The native part of the city of Lahore is one of the most interesting in Northern India, and has distinct architectural features which raise the buildings very much above the level of the ordinary native town. Huge buildings tower up skywards, storey after storey, in the intensely narrow streets, till on looking upwards one only sees the merest strip of blue sky above. The houses themselves are profusely decorated and ornamented, and are full of quaint fantastic nooks and corners. Here one sees a tiny balcony perched in mid-air, and catches a glimpse through the carved screen of white-robed figures gazing at the moving scene below;

there an oriel window or a quaint turret jutting out at the corner of the street, where reclines a turbaned form slowly and majestically smoking his peaceful *narghileh*; while giving on the street below are the dim, small shops of the traders, and the ever-changing, countless throng of passers-by. One of the streets I drove down was so narrow that on one occasion a Brahmani bull, which was in possession of the roadway, had to be driven into a shop before my *gharry* could pass, and on another occasion a laden camel had to be hustled and shoved into a narrow side gully to leave us the right of way of the roadway.

I presently got clear of the city, and emerged on the river-bank, where was the ancient fort and palace. There is inside this latter building, a building called the Naulaka, which is an imitation of Jehangir's palace at Agra. It is, however, poor in comparison with the former, and a great deal of the carving is very dilapidated, while a large proportion of the mosaic decoration of flowers, etc. has either dropped or been picked out. Another sight is the Palace of Mirrors, the whole walls, roof, etc. being formed of small portions of looking-glass set in cement. When the guardian of the place lit a torch, and waved it about in the dimmest corners, the effect was weird and fantastic. The chief object of interest, however, in the whole fort is the armoury. Here is an excellent collection of native and European arms, from the ancient matchlock to the more modern Snider. The camel-cannons were most interesting and wonderful specimens of ancient Indian smith-work. The whole fort is of great archæological interest, but the interior has been very much spoiled by the erection of modern buildings, which serve as quarters

for the soldiers garrisoning the place. They were incongruous to a degree, and did much to destroy the harmony of this ancient pile. On the outer wall there is an ancient frieze of coloured tiles which represents various animals. The colouring and artistic work is super-excellent, and the best thing of its kind I have seen in India. The gardens of Lahore are well worth a visit, and one's eyes were gladdened with seeing all the old English flowers which flourish so well in these Northern latitudes during the cold-weather season. I chummed up with the superintendent and we had a good old horticultural "*buck.*" He showed me a collection of pansies, in which he took great pride, and they were certainly the best I had ever seen, some of the blooms being as large as the palm of my hand, and the colours exquisite. We exchanged experiences, and I was able to give him some account of my own horticultural failures in beautiful Bombay, where gardening is pursued under climatic difficulties which the horticulturists of Northern India have not to contend with. I made that evening the acquaintance of the editor of the *Civil and Military Gazette*, and over pipes and pegs we concocted a leader for his paper upon the question of famine in the Punjaub, portions of which I have annexed to the end of this chapter.

The next day I heard from Fenton that Douglas's camp was at Ala, and that he would be ready for me whenever I came. The next morning I drove to the station, to make inquiries as to the best method of reaching this place. After an interview with the station-master, I found that Ala was merely a "flag" station,[1] on the Bhera branch of the Sind-Sagar railway, and that

[1] A station where, if required, the train stops by signal.

it was just beyond the celebrated battle-field of Chillianwallah. The best and only way to get there would be to have a special carriage attached to the night-mail, which could be shunted into a siding at Lala Musa Junction and attached to the morning and only down-train to Ala. The carriage could drop me there, and be brought back on the evening train, and I could have supper and sleep again in Lala Musa siding. I should arrive at Lahore by the down-mail at about eleven the following morning. I accordingly agreed to this plan, and went off to make my arrangements for a start that evening.

In the afternoon I went to witness the official departure of Sir Dennis Fitzpatrick, which was an imposing function. The *Civil and Military* thus described the ceremony—

"Sir Dennis Fitzpatrick's career in the Punjaub was brought to a close on Friday evening, when he left Lahore by special train. The hour of departure of the late Lieutenant-Governor was 6.30 p.m., but the Lahore railway-station was crowded with European and native residents long before that time. The native chiefs arrived in their due order, and included the following: the Maharajah of Kashmir, the Maharajah of Patiala, the Raja of Kapurthala, the Nawab of Bhawalpore, the Raja of Sind, the Raja of Faridkot, and the Raja of Nabha. Practically the whole of the civil and military residents of Lahore and Mian Mir were present, to bid good-bye to Sir Dennis and the Misses Fitzpatrick. An escort of the Punjaub Light Horse accompanied the late Lieutenant-Governor, and there were two guards of honour provided by the North-Western Railway Volunteers outside, and that of the Somersetshire Light Infantry inside the

station. Hearty cheers were given to Sir Dennis while the band played 'Auld Lang Syne,' and the train steamed out of the station."

Mr. Mackworth Young assumed charge of the office of Lieutenant-Governor of the Punjaub and its dependencies the following day.

"THE FAMINE IN THE PUNJAUB.

"The state of the agricultural prospects of this Province, and the condition of the famine labourers on the different works that have been opened in various districts, must be already fairly well known to any one who has followed the scattered reports which have appeared in these columns from time to time, from the different centres concerned. Nevertheless, it may be well at the present moment to gather up some of the disconnected threads, and at a time when the new crop is practically safe, to present a complete picture of the situation brought about by the failure of previous seasons.

"Beginning with the south of the Province, as has already been stated, four districts in the Delhi division, namely Delhi, Gurgaon, Rohtak and Karnal, have received no rain. There is, however, a certain amount of irrigation there, and although irrigation alone will only produce a twelve-anna crop, that is sufficient to prevent the famine being severe in those parts, and there are only about 3000 in each district on the works. On the western side of Delhi city, and for ten miles west and south, there have only been four-anna crops for the last three years, and at present there is a distinct scarcity; the canals do not reach this region, and even though all above this is under irrigation, it is doubtful whether

there will be sufficient water to ripen the crops in every district. South of that, the winter rains fell, and there should be an average twelve-anna crop. In Delhi itself, the public kitchen which has been started feeds about 750 people daily; the food is given at two o'clock, and consists of four chuppaties for a man, three for a woman, and one or two for the children, and the number of persons in receipt of this relief is increasing; there are two kitchens, one for Hindoos and one for Mussulmans, both classes getting the same food. This relief is supplied by the Municipal Committee, and costs them 325 rupees a week, one member of the Committee inspecting the kitchens daily.

"Next we come to Hissar, a district in which there are absolutely no crops, and where, if anywhere in the Province, a pronounced state of scarcity may be said to exist; out of a population of seven and three-quarter millions, in all about sixty thousand are in receipt of relief, being spread over the works on the Ghaggar canal, the Western Jumna, Rangoi tank-works and roads. The Government sanctioned all the works asked for by the Commissioner; amongst these was the Ghaggar canal, which has been on the *tapis* for the last twenty years, and which, as we have remarked before, is an excellent work, carrying as it does water right through into Bikanir. The original forecast for the labourers on this work was ten thousand, but it has already risen to twenty-five thousand, and there should be enough work on it and on the Western Jumna canal to supply sufficient relief until the monsoon begins in July. The average wage is one anna two pies, children getting either one or two pies daily, that being left to the discretion of the district officers. It is expected that before the rains there will

be quite a lac on relief works in Hissar. There are absolutely no crops, except a small area on the canal in the Hansi and Hissar *tahsils;* neither is there any food-supply in the country, and fodder is being imported for the few cattle that exist; this, however, can only be done by the richer zemindars. The rest of the cattle live on trees, shrubs, and any roots they can find, and have taken to burrowing out the roots like pigs. The mortality amongst the cattle is enormous; over 40,000 have already died or been slaughtered, that is, two-thirds of the whole stock possessed by the district, so it is easy to see what a fine field exists here for the work of the Punjaub Provincial Fund, in supplying new stock as well as seed. Fortunately, as a contrast to this, the precautions taken by Government have resulted in there being no excessive mortality amongst the people. The probable estimate of the cost of the famine in Hissar is four and a half lacs, of which one and a half have already been expended.

"Perhaps the most disquieting aspect of the scarcity in this district is the rate at which the land is going out of the hands of the peasant-proprietor, into the hands of the *bunniah;* the mortgaging of land has increased by more than 300 per cent., and all the registrars have applied for an increase in their establishments. Upon this subject we have dealt sufficiently often and at length for there to be little left to say here, but it may be remarked that the zemindar recognizes that the free power given to him to alienate his land, which is the root of the present state of things, is a creation of the British rule, and that no application of the relief funds now being collected in England and elsewhere, would be more popular than the redemption of these mortgaged lands lost through no

fault of their owners; aid might also be extended to those zemindars who have got in arrears with their rent, but this is a less pressing question, and of course both of them are very difficult to settle in actual practice. Returning to the Ghaggar canal, the mixture of Hindoos and Mussulmans in the same camp at first caused a difficulty, owing to the latter slaughtering cattle; now if a man wants to kill a cow he must ask permission, and a place is appointed for him to do so. The work on the canal itself is described as being wonderfully well done; it takes two and a half famine coolies to do the same work as one skilled hand, but otherwise the result is much the same. At first the same tendency to scamp the work was observed that is to be found in practically all contractors' work, and in other countries besides India; the coolies used to dig only nine inches deep instead of their allotted amount of one foot, but that has now been got over by giving each man a stick twelve inches long, and he is not paid until he has done his full task. Every third person on these, as on all other relief works, is a non-worker.

"The chief works in the north of the province are those on the Jhelum canal, but they can bear no comparison in the matter of urgency with those of Hissar, as the degree of scarcity in the two districts is entirely distinct. On these works there were, on March 3rd, 39,000 persons in all, one-third of whom were zemindars and two-thirds mossalis; they are split up into camps of 2000 each, there being six camps in each division, as the original plan of one large camp for 50,000 persons was found to be entirely impracticable. The work done up to February 27th, measured 310,000 cubic feet, the daily out-turn for each person being 20·4 cubic feet per

worker, and the total expenses for the week 26,000 rupees. Each section of 1000 feet is given to a special gang, containing 900 workers, and the mossalis and zemindars have to be kept apart, as they will not work together. On all the relief works in the Province, however, the people are extraordinarily quiet and well-behaved; they sit in rows to obtain their wages, and come up to receive it each in their turn, and, as Sir Roper Lethbridge noticed during his visit to the works at Jhelum, only one policeman is required to guard the whole wages of the camp. Where else but in India would you find such want joined to such lack of disorder?"—*The Civil and Military Gazette*, Lahore, March 8, 1897.

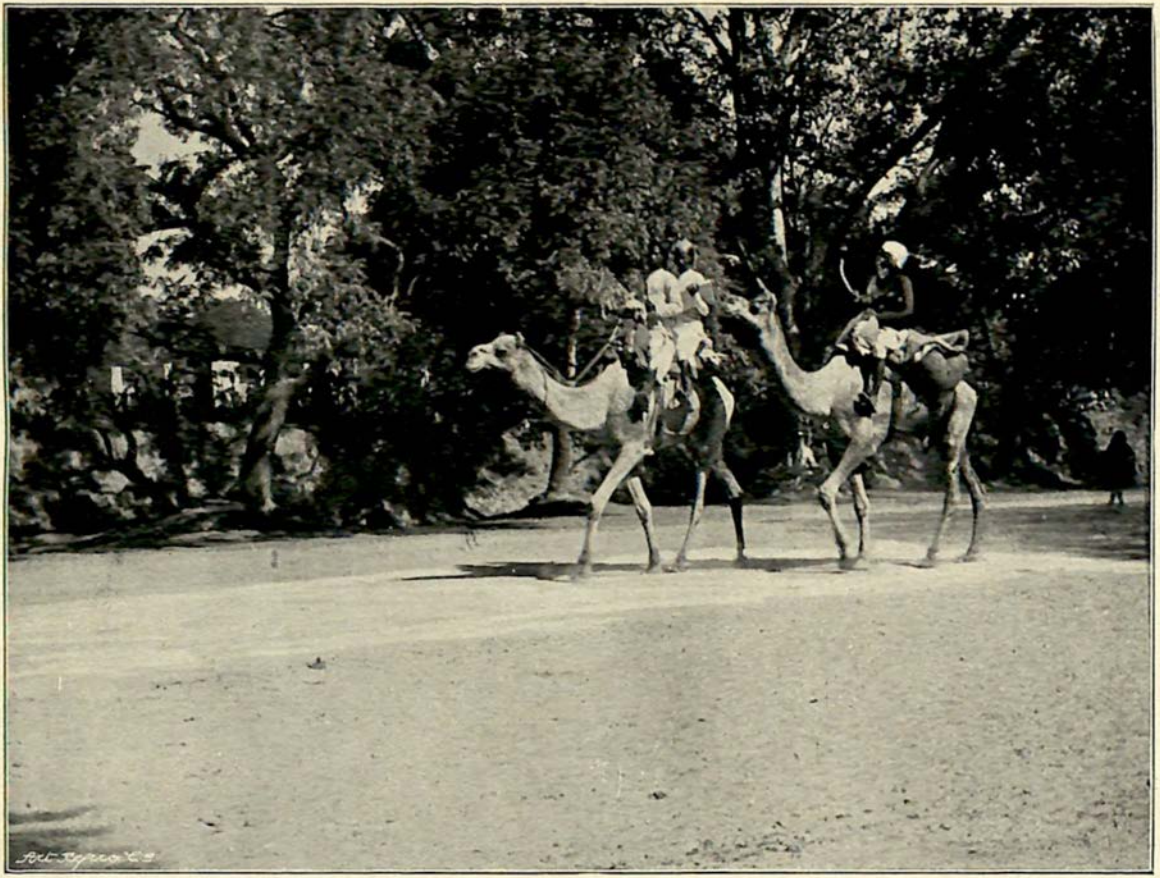
CHAPTER XXV

THE JHELUM CANAL

IN pursuance with my pre-arranged plan, I caught that evening the Peshawur Mail, and in due course, about one a.m., arrived at Lala Musa Junction. Here I was hustled and shunted about for some time, but my carriage was eventually brought to a standstill in a distant siding, to await the dawn, when my journey would be continued.

Shortly after daybreak I was again *en route*, and watched with much interest the country which I was passing through; on the right-hand side were the range of the Salt Hills, while behind them, in the far distance, towered skywards the lower ranges of the Himalayas, which I saw gleaming in the morning sun. We passed through the low scrubby jungle on the left, which historic ground was the scene of the battle of Chillianwallah.

In due course the train halted at the station of Ala which is a mere hut in charge of a single official. I asked the station-master where was the sahib's camp, and he pointed to a collection of tents standing out dazzlingly white in the morning sun, and distant some mile and a half across the plain. Followed by coolies—who seemed to have sprung from the earth, as there was no sign of habitation beyond the station-hut—carrying my kit, I set



BIKANIRI NIGHTINGALES.

out to walk across to the camp. The scene was quite a pastoral one, and indeed the patriarchal effect was much increased by the fact that Captain Douglas was standing at the door of his tent, and seeing me while I was yet a great way off, ran to me with words of welcome; and secondly, they hastened to take a kid out of the flock, and having seethed it, made me a mess such as my soul loveth.

After breakfast it was arranged that we should visit the works, and I then discovered that my fate was sealed, and I was expected to tempt Providence from the front-seat of a real *Bikaniri sowari* camel. I found the creature doubled up at the door of the tent, and got up outside, when the beast unfolded itself, and I arose like a star in the firmament, but luckily not a falling one, and off we jogged. The sight must have been a somewhat comical one, and the contrast between my slightly portly figure, joggling and swaying with the every motion of the *oont*, and stiff, bolt-uprightness of the Bikaniri attendant on the hind seat, was, as Douglas in fits of laughter told me, very striking. There were at the time of my visit some 30,000 employed on the works, the numbers having dropped considerably since the start, when Sir Roper Lethbridge saw 50,000 working like one. It was soon found that the herding together in one spot of nearly half a lac of human beings was flying in the face of Providence, and invoking the appearance of the dread cholera demon. The whole mass had been gradually drafted into separate camps, line upon line, here a few and there a few, and the whole works were going on in the most orderly and approved fashion. The Deputy-Commissioner has an innate talent for organization, and had the whole thing working like

clock-work. These are the only works I had seen where the system adopted afforded an easy opportunity for practical supervision of the out-turn of the allotted task. The work of digging is measured out for each gang,

30	1
29	2
28	3
27	4
26	5
25	6
24	7
23	8
22	9
21	10
20	11
19	12
18	13
17	14
16	15

which is again split up into working parties, each party consisting of two diggers and three carriers.

The bed of the canal is then divided into thirty portions of a certain number of cubic feet to be removed, and

these lots are numbered, corresponding numbers being given to each work-party. These work-parties generally consist of groups of relatives—each section of 1000 feet of canal being allotted to a tribal task-party of 900 workers.

By the sub-division mentioned above, a skilled supervisor of work can almost see at a glance which particular work-party has scamped its work. He is thus able to penalize the small party of five workers who are deficient in the task without the others of the gang suffering. In other words, he can spot the defaulters, and make them pay for their defaulting without mulcting those who have earned their full wage. This system worked admirably, gave great satisfaction to the workers themselves, and reduced to the lowest possible minimum the cost of supervision and direction.

Captain Douglas thoroughly understands and appreciates the natives, and is a man who has gained their sympathy, and even affection, as I could see by the way in which the faces of the workers lit up when he approached a gang of workers. The whole lot seemed very *koosh*,[1] and looked upon Douglas as their *ma-bap*,[2] treating him with the most profound respect and admiration. One thing that he has introduced has appealed to the native love of pomp, circumstance, and revelry. It was, that the gang who during the week had managed the greatest out-turn of work, was for the next week solemnly escorted to and from their work by the beat of drum, and a professional *tom-tomist* had been specially engaged to relieve the monotony of the work with soul-inspiring music. This was a great feature, and excited a great deal of friendly rivalry between the competing gangs. We rode to the gang

[1] Happy, contented. [2] Father and mother.

who occupied this position of trust, and the player greeted us with a perfect cataract and hurricane of regulated and chromatic tappings of the instrument. The rattle of the divine instrument sounds to European ears somewhat monotonous, but any particularly brilliant piece of execution of a difficult passage, brought out a loud "*shabash*"[1] from some bronzed worker of the plains, and he struck his *khodalie* into the hard ground with renewed energy. The system of payment is an advance upon what I had seen elsewhere, and by it one *naib tahsildar* (head-man) can properly supervise and direct the proper payment of three gangs at one and the same time. Martial law and the soldiers' pocket-book are the chief factors in the whole working, and everything is done with the utmost military precision. The three groups are drawn up in hollow square, with the three cashiers and treasury-clerks inside, and in the centre is the directing genius, the *naib tahsildar*. The people are all numbered, and when the roll is called, the same three numbers from the three gangs advance simultaneously to receive their *pies*. We rode down the bank of the canal for some distance, and inspected several gangs of workers. The bed of the canal will be one hundred and eighty feet wide, the spoil-bank is ninety feet wide on each side, and the canal will be from fourteen to sixteen feet deep in all, so that the work is a large one.

We then rode to one of the refuges, which Captain Douglas had established for taking care of the non-working children during the day. While going across the rough country, my dear old dromedary made a very bad stumble, and how it was he did not have me off I cannot imagine. It is no joke to fall off a camel, as it

[1] "Very good," "bravo!"

is somewhat similar to falling out of a third-floor window, and I can only conclude that I am being reserved for some higher fate. Douglas was as much startled as I was, exclaiming, "Good heavens! that was a near thing." To make matters worse, the Bikaniri driver on the back seat welted his property for all he was worth, and we started off full-bat across the plain. I remember the effect in earlier days of being tossed in a blanket, but that is mere child's play to the motion of that old "humming-bird" when at full speed ahead. But to get on to the refuge, which, at the rate we were skimming over the desert, was soon reached.

These children at first had been allowed to wander all over the camp, to the detriment of themselves and those of the workers to whom they belonged. This was found unsatisfactory, and so in each camp, large and shady enclosures had been made, and here the children were brought by their parents in the morning and removed at night. Another improvement had been effected. In the earlier days of the formation of the camp, the non-working children had received their dole in money, but the Commissioner had found that this was not good for the youngsters, as they did not get from their parents their due share of food from the common pot. He introduced a system of feeding these children twice daily with a good square meal, the effect of this being that at once the number of children sank from eighteen to fourteen thousand. The obvious inference to be drawn is, that at least four thousand of these bairns were on the works for the purposes of speculation and profit on the part of the parents.

From the *crèche* to the *langrawala*[1] was a good

[1] The sick-folk place.

step, but the motto which I had adopted at the beginning of my tour being *Ubique quo fas et gloria ducunt*, I manfully plodded on. This *langrawala* was a place where the halt, the lame, the blind, and the generally infirm were kept, and were looked after by a posse of old, pensioned sepoys, whose services Captain Douglas had largely and most successfully enlisted on the works for all minor positions of trust and supervision. They had had the benefit of drill and discipline, were amenable to orders, and in fact made most valuable under-officers. The inmates of this hospital were of course a very poor lot of specimens, but when one recollected that they were practically the sweepings of an afflicted district, one was not surprised at their somewhat wan and sickly appearance. The physique of the greater part of the workers stood out in distinct contrast, and though there were several bad individual cases amongst them, yet the general standard was far above what one expected to find in such a large collection of famine coolies. We then went on to the head-office, where I duly went through the return of tallies, details, reports, registers, etc., which I will not retail, though they showed me that the whole *bandobust* was excellent, and that a master's spirit of organization dominated the whole concern.

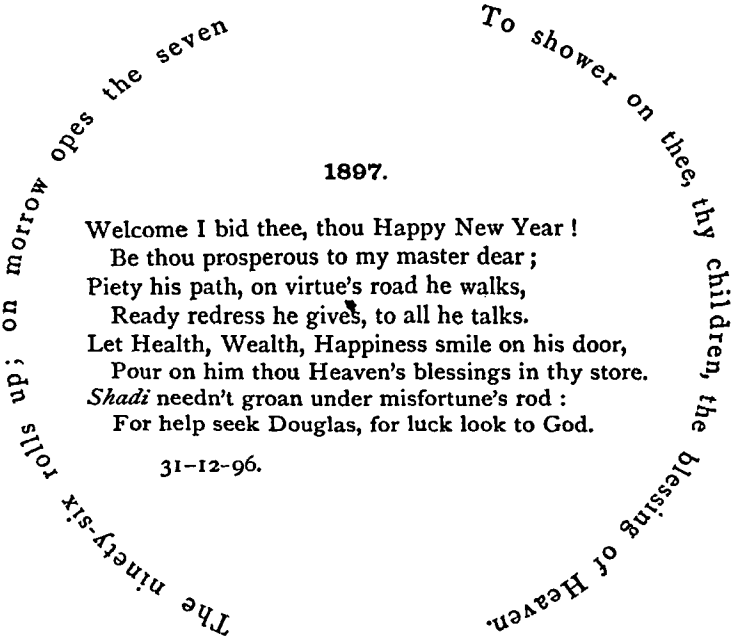
I had now, off and on (voluntarily), been the victim of the vagaries of that bounding camel for some five mortal hours, and when the deputy-sahib proposed a jaunt of some ten miles in the opposite direction, I flatly refused. For some years past, though I had been a man of somewhat sedentary habits, yet I distinctly felt that the noble animal which I was above, was wearing a hole in my system, and thinking that I had

done enough for England, home, and duty, ignobly but firmly preferred a speedy return to the tents of Kedar, as represented by the Commissioner's camp and the inglorious ease of a long-chair in the shade. After tiffen we had another long discussion about the famine, and the Commissioner told me a yarn illustrative of one side of the famine question. When he moved to his present camp, he told his head-clerk to make arrangements with the proprietor to purchase a field of standing corn hard by, which would serve as fodder for the horses. An acre of this was bought, and the price covenanted upon was some four-score silver rupees. A few days later, Douglas was wishful to pay for his purchase, and said to the clerk, "Where is the man I bought this Naboth's vineyard from?" "Oh, sahib, he is in gang No. 27; I will fetch him." Here was this peasant-proprietor, to whom the Commissioner was the debtor of this sum of rupees, calmly working as a famine coolie on the Government works. Another amusing thing was the Christmas greeting to Douglas from his head-clerk, of which I made a copy. Printers' ink cannot reproduce the gorgeous emblazoning and decoration of this wonderful memento, of which I annex the mere script (p. 268).

We spent the remaining hours in pleasant conversation, till the man set to watch said it was time for us to start to catch the train, as he could see the smoke in the distance. Mounting again the faithful *oont*, we trotted off to the station, the Commissioner whiling the time by telling me an experience of his a few days before. He wished to go up the line, but cut it rather fine as regards time, and had to push the beast for the last mile. He arrived at the station, the train waiting. When they

halted the old dromedary turned sulky, and nothing would induce him to lie down to let the sahib get off, in spite of the repeated "*shoosh*," "*shoosh*," which is the mystic sound the Bikaniri driver uses to make his camel kneel. And though Douglas pulled his head till it nearly came

XMAS GREETING


To shower on thee, thy children, the blessing of Heaven.
1897.
Welcome I bid thee, thou Happy New Year!
Be thou prosperous to my master dear;
Piety his path, on virtue's road he walks,
Ready redress he gives, to all he talks.
Let Health, Wealth, Happiness smile on his door,
Pour on him thou Heaven's blessings in thy store.
Shadi needn't groan under misfortune's rod:
For help seek Douglas, for luck look to God.
31-12-96.
The ninety-six rolls up; on morrow opes the seven

off, that beast simply stood and bubbled. What with Douglas shouting to the officials to wait, and the native passengers filling the windows of the train admiring the *tamasha* presented to them by the *Lat sahib*, the scene must have been a most comical one. We fully suspected the same thing would happen to-day, but with

the usual contrariness of the beast, at the first "*shoosh*" he shut up like a clasp-knife, or, perhaps better, a pair of folding-steps, and nearly sent me to kingdom come over his head. In fact, if the driver hadn't seized my belt, I should have pitched over the bows of the ship of the desert, head first. In the train going up I had a glorious transitory glimpse of the snow-clad Himalayas. They stood up in the sky suffused with that lovely rose-coloured glow that one is familiar with at sunset on Mont Blanc, when viewed from the Place at Geneva. The gorgeous Indian sunset made, however, the colouring more pronounced. It eventually faded away, and the mists rising in the gathering darkness enveloped the mountains in their fleecy folds. It was, however, a memorable sight. I arrived at Lala Musa in time for a meal, and going to bed in the carriage in the siding, was safely landed back at Lahore the following morning. Thus ended my trip to the Jhelum canal, which, from the courtesy and hospitality received at the hands of Captain and Mrs. Douglas, was marked with a double distinguishing star in the diary of my tour, and with a white stone in the recesses of my memory.

CHAPTER XXVI

UMBALLA

THE state of the agricultural prospects of the Punjaub about Christmas-time was giving the authorities much cause for anxiety, but the rains which fell in the end of December and beginning of January, in a great measure removed the pressure in several districts. The *rabi* crop was therefore practically assured in the regions lying between Lahore and Meerut; north of this the scarcity was severe, and the Jhelum district particularly felt the strain. Irrigation plays such an important part in the out-turn of the food-stuffs from the Punjaub, that it may be worth while to touch briefly in detail upon the subject. The complete crop-returns for the past *kharif* indicated that the area of matured crops was fifteen per cent. below the average of the last ten years; of this season's crops forty per cent. were irrigated, compared with the irrigated area of only twenty-five per cent. in normal years. A contraction of a mere fifteen per cent. of the cropped area hardly, however, explained an enhancement in the price of grain to nearly one hundred per cent. above normal rates. It has been proved by subsequent knowledge that zemindars in many cases in these provinces largely profited by famine—that is to say, those who had been able to raise a good crop. The trite saying that "What is

one man's meat is another man's poison," applies in some of these districts to the cultivators, who, like Jeshurun of old, have waxed fat and kicked, or in other words, from the exceptional prices realized, have been able to throw from off their necks the galling yoke of mortgage on their land. So that in these favoured regions of the Punjaub, exactly the converse of what had happened in the Hissar district took place, and the zemindars, instead of increasing their burden of debt, were able to somewhat lighten it.

This will show the intense difficulty that everybody connected with the famine had to contend with, due to the sudden variations in the condition of the people owing to a difference of climatic influence. In one part you found a prosperous peasantry; in another circle, perhaps not fifty miles away, the whole mass of the population were plunged into the lowest depths of misery and want.

Unfortunately, the collective gain of the agriculturists as a body is a balance of gains and losses, and the losers are for the most part the poorer peasant-proprietors, to whom this present distress means hopeless entanglement in the net of the *bannia*. The increase of the Stamp and Registration Fees in the land of the Five Rivers clearly showed this. I hope that a very large part of the funds raised by the open-handedness of our home-staying countrymen, in the final stages of the famine, have found the excellent outlet of the restitution to the Punjaub peasant of his ancestral acres, which passed out of his hand through *force majeure*, and not by any individual or collective laxity on his part.

It is and always will be the province and foremost duty of the Government to protect and save the lives

of its Indian subjects. Private charity, or funds raised in any public fund, would have been grossly misappropriated if applied to the mere affording relief from starvation of India's millions. It has been estimated that the bill Government will have to pay will amount to about ten millions sterling in all. In this the Mansion House and other funds ought not to figure, and we shall await with some interest the report of the Famine Relief Committee.

With this exordium, which a careful perusal of all the famine literature I could lay my hands on in Lahore, anent the burning question of scarcity in Northern India, has invited, let me get on with my story. In addition to the Jhelum canal, of which I have given an account in the previous chapter, there is also another immense work in course of construction. The Chenab canal is a Government undertaking for the eventual benefit of its own exchequer and its humble subjects. It has been under course of construction for several years, and though the Bakh-Mian-Ali and Jhang branches are now practically complete, yet a vast amount of earth-work remained to be done on the Gugeria branch. It was estimated about five lacs' worth of work was to be done here, and though a great portion had already been put into the hands of petty contractors, yet it was calculated that the residuum in the Gujranwalla-Jhang and Montgomery districts would find employment for over six months for some eighty or ninety thousand souls.

I rested on Sunday, as I was dead tired after my trip to Ala, and left Lahore on Monday, arriving at Umballa in the evening. I had reached with Ala the *Ultima Thule* of my tour, and was on the homeward track. The country I passed through on my way down to Umballa

showed no signs of scarcity. I crossed the Beas, which even then contained a fair body of water, and in flood-time must be about a mile wide. I crossed too a couple of splendid canals, the Mari Doab and Sirhind; these intersected the country, and I believe draw their supplies from the Sutlej river. As I got further down south, and towards Umballa, I came again upon the bullock-and-rope method of raising water; as in the Lahore district the Persian wheel-system was almost universal. In many parts the peasants were engaged in their spring ploughing. A Northern Indian plough is a simple affair, consisting of a more or less crooked stick, with a cross-bar, on which the gentle ploughman stands, and thus his patient oxen slowly scratch the surface-soil. When the seed is sown, the method of pressing it in is equally primitive, but without doubt effective. The oxen are attached to a mere baulk of timber, and this they drag over the field, the driver again standing on the baulk to steady it. It certainly has the effect of smoothing the field, but the labour entailed upon the patient *byles* must be excessive.

I had really no occasion to go or stop at Umballa, but I had heard that Sir Anthony Macdonald was on tour, and would not return to Lucknow till the thirteenth of the month. It happened curiously enough to be race-week at Umballa, and so I thought I might just as well kill time there as anywhere else. I had been told at Delhi by some of my friends that the best hotel was Lumley's, but that it was kept by an old spinster who was very peculiar, and if you got in her bad books you were stranded, as there was no other hotel that a Christian could put up at or put up with. I was told too that she had a special aversion to racing men, and

looked upon book-makers and persons of that ilk as children of darkness. When I got to Umballa I drove to the hotel, and found an elderly party, clothed in rusty black, with an impossible false-front and a somewhat stern visage, sitting at the receipt of custom. I went up and said, "Can I have a room?" "Are you a *bookie?*" "A what?" "A book-maker, a betting man, a man that goes racing?" I was just about to explain, when up strolled two well-known owners, who with one voice exclaimed, "Hullo, old man, come racin'? Where have you been? Haven't seen you since last Poona Cup-day!"

Things were getting pretty bad for me, as I saw the landlady's cold steel-grey eye was on me, and the situation required drastic measures. Looking at the two with cold deliberation, I eyed them and remarked, "Gentlemen, you have the advantage of me, and must be taking me for somebody else."

It took an awful lot of drinks and explanation to put that little matter right with my friends, later on, when I was in possession of my room. That dear old lady eyed me with much suspicion, and I think that to this day she believes I am a child of sin, especially when she found me hobnobbing with the racing coterie, whom she had allowed to make the best use they could of her hospitable roof-tree and board.

The Maharajah of Patiala had brought his eleven down to play the station, and I put in the morning watching the match, which his Highness' lot won comfortably. Going to the races in the afternoon, I passed a shop which bore the following sign—

RAM BUX. MAKER OF POLO-STICKS AND COFFINS.

Any one knowing the normal condition of the polo-

ground of Umballa, which resembles nothing more than a hard-baked plate, will perhaps consider the conjunction fortuitous, if not ominous. There was a high wind blowing, and the first two races were run in a dust-storm, which was so thick that nothing was visible of ponies or jocks till they were just on the post.

So idling away my time in cricket and racing, I got through a couple of days before starting for Lucknow.

PART IV

THE NORTH-WEST PROVINCES

CHAPTER XXVII

LUCKNOW

I WORKED my way steadily down to Lucknow, making a call at Saharanpur *en route.* The most careful and diligent personal investigation failed to discover any real famine in the vicinity of Saharanpur. The crops looked smiling where they had the benefit of well and tank irrigation, and this too was fairly widespread. I was told too that the winter rains saved at the right moment a very large area which the officials had forecast as liable to suffer, and so had lessened the burden which has this year been placed upon the shoulders of those responsible for the welfare of the people. I noticed, however, in more than one instance during my progress, that man had taken the place of the patient *byle* in the haulage of water from the irrigation wells, and that four, and in some cases even half-a-dozen, stalwart peasants had manned the rope which brought to the surface the all-beneficent liquid. I have been in many parts of India, and have seen much of the enormous mortality amongst the draught and store oxen, but it was reserved for the North-West to give this new experience of manual instead of animal labour.

On arrival at Lucknow I drove at once to Hill's Hotel. The proprietor, *Old Hill*, as he is known all over India, is a bit of a character. He is one of the survivors who, in the time of the Mutiny, marched to the relief of the beleaguered city. Since that, however, lang syne, he has turned his sword into a cork-screw, and from relieving his fellow-countrymen in distress, now takes them in and does for them. And very comfortable he makes his guests. We had a long confab one evening when he invited me into his private sanctum, and over whisky-and-water gave me a history of his life, which was cram full of interesting details of Mutiny times. He is the sole survivor of his family, and has not been out of India for the last forty years. Now-a-days he goes off during the hot season to a house at Naini Tal, but formerly he established a record of having passed twenty consecutive hot-weathers in the plains. He is a splendid specimen of the old system of long-service soldier, and when he warmed up to the subject, gave me a very lucid account of the history of those stirring times. On the afternoon of my arrival at Lucknow, I took a carriage and called upon the Commissioner, Mr. Hardy, who made an appointment with me to go to the relief works on the following Sunday. I told him that I was very anxious to obtain an interview with the Lieutenant-Governor, but doubted much whether his Honour would see me. He kindly promised to mention the matter to Sir Anthony, whom he would see that afternoon, and advised me to write to his private secretary, Mr. Dobbs. This I did, and spent the rest of the day in visiting and exploring the Residency and all other places of interest made memorable in that siege and subsequent relief. The guide who

showed me over was himself an old pensioner, and son of one of the native soldiers who did not betray his salt during the crisis. Mr. Hardy had kindly furnished me with a large file of famine statistics, which I took home and devoted the evening to getting up, so that I might, should an occasion occur, be able to meet Sir Anthony Macdonald, at any rate not quite unarmed.

The Lucknow district has a population of three-quarters of a million, of which there is a quarter of a million souls in the city alone. Two-thirds of the whole, however, are non-urban, or in other words agriculturists. The hangers-on and dependents of the old Court of Oude were an important factor in the urban population, and the officials experienced the same difficulties with those pseudo-royalties that arose with the ancient royal house of Delhi. In the previous October it was clearly foreseen that distress would arise in the city, and funds had been established which were subsidized by Government. Over 15,000 *purdah nashin* and respectable poor were at the time of my visit being helped from this local charitable relief fund, and it was expected that the numbers in the next two months would largely increase. In December the death returns in the city were 37·2 per thousand, but the cold of the month of January increased this to the rate of 45·50. Directly the rains failed the Government at once stepped in, and in the agricultural districts gave enormous *takavi* advances. By being prompt with this measure, they prevented aimless migration and the disintegration of the village system. This policy turned out to be far the cheaper in the long run, and though the famine-bill in the North-West Provinces will be enormous, yet without doubt the stitch in time saved nine.

Hardoi was the worst district in the North-West, and with a population of 1,113,000, the total on relief of all kinds reached the astounding number of 157,000 souls. One chief reason for this abnormal amount of distress was that the cultivators in this district had had their sufferings intensified by a succession of floods during the preceding three years, which had almost entirely washed away and annihilated the standing crops. Such then is a brief *réchauffé* of my midnight researches into the statistics of the Lucknow district.

Sunrise the next morning found me equipped and awaiting on the verandah of the hotel the arrival of the Commissioner. With soldierly punctuality, a few minutes later Mr. Hardy drove up, and we went off to pick up Colonel Pulford, R.E., who was the spring and fount of all famine works and relief measures in these Provinces. I found both him and the Commissioner very smart men, and fully masters of all details of organization. A story I was told anent a recent visit to the works will serve to illustrate this, and to show what a very firm grip of the method and manners of the natives can be obtained by men who are really willing to study their characters. A group of men came up to the Commissioner with the usual wail of "*Panch pies bas na hai, huzoor, burra pake nái hoaga*" ("Five pice is not enough, lord protector of the poor, my stomach will not become big"). Our friend scanned the lot, who were prostrate at his feet, and curtly ordered one man to *currero* (stand upright). He then deftly began to examine this fellow, and feeling his ribs, commiserated him on his poor condition. The search continued till the nimble fingers of the Commissioner struck a hard protuberance in the waist-belt of the suppliant. "What's

this?" said the Commissioner. "Nothing, sahib," was the reply. "Why, bless me, you must be suffering from a tumour; let me see." Deftly unrolling the *dhotie*, he produced a hard roll of bright copper coin. "Quite right, my poor fellow," said the Commissioner, "in this way your stomach will never become big." A trifle abashed the fellow slunk away, and a deep "*shabash*"[1] from the other suppliants betokened their approval of the Commissioner's astuteness. They had played the game and lost, and with true oriental fatalism accepted the situation. The *hookum*, however, went round the camp, and never again was the cry of "*panch-pies*" heard.

With this interlude by way of introduction to the Commissioner, let us get on to the relief works. These were situated at the Machhi Bhawan, or old arsenal, which was blown up by the English in the earliest stages of the Mutiny, and has remained a mass of ruins ever since. The work consisted in excavating the old walls and foundations, and removing the ruins generally. They extracted therefrom millions of old bricks, which had a distinct marketable value, and which were being carried and piled in orderly lines on a vacant plot of ground below. The spoil and rubbish is employed in raising a long flood-embankment upon the banks of the Goomtee river, which will be of distinct use in preventing this river in flood-time from encroaching as of old upon the low-lying ground situate outside the city walls. When the whole place, site and ground of the palace, had been trimmed and shaved and tidied up, it was intended to turn it into another public garden, a continuation of the public park, which was the outcome of public labour in

[1] "Very good."

the previous famine of '77. It will be another lung for the populous and overcrowded city of Lucknow. It was at these particular works that Colonel Pulford instituted the system of classification and identification of each individual unit receiving relief, whether worker, non-worker or dependent, which system is absolutely unique and infallible, and has been universally adopted all over the North-West Provinces. There can be very little doubt that the repressive measures and methods of combating with the famine under the *régime* and experience of the officers of the North-West will, on a future occasion, should it arise, become universal all over India. As far as I could see, it was absolutely incapable of improvement, as I will shortly endeavour to show. The Commissioner and Colonel Pulford fully explained its working, and very shortly I had an occasion to test the accuracy of their statements. I wandered off by myself, while they were engaged in supervising some details of administration and talking to a gang *mohurrir*. I found ensconced behind a pile of bricks a chubby little black atom of some five summers, who was solemnly engaged in making a mud-pie. He was absolutely alone and in a complete state of nature, with not even a ticket round his neck. With a certain scepticism about the perfect ability of the identification system, I went back to the sahibs, and said, "Come along here, I want to show you something." Leading them up to the infant, I said, "Who's that?" The Colonel immediately summoned the gang-mates in the immediate vicinity, and made an inquiry. At last one said, "That boy belongs to a mother working in my gang. Fetch her." The woman came, bringing two other children. On questioning her as to her name, etc., she produced three

tickets from her waist, saying the *bucha log*[1] were likely to destroy them, and gravely proceeded to hang them round the necks of her family. On inspecting the muster-roll we found that this would-be waif belonged to such-and-such a gang, that his name was so-and-so, corresponding with the name given him by his mother and on his ticket, that he was five years old, had been on the works a month, had been paid his *pies* yesterday, and that his number corresponded with the series of the other members of the family. I climbed down, and with a quiet smile the Commissioner said, "Seems pretty perfect, eh?" while the gallant Colonel chuckled behind the baffled reporter and would-be picker-of-holes in the system, for the next couple of hundred yards.

If there is not system and method in the North-West, there is nothing; and this was further exemplified during my visit of inspection that morning. It has always been urged that the working charges on a famine relief works could never be paid daily, and that the best that could be hoped for was three days a week. I saw 6500 people paid in half-an-hour.

Another of Colonel Pulford's marvellous methods of system and organization. Although it was not the rule to pay on Sunday, yet to show me the Colonel said he would make an exception in my favour. At about eleven o'clock we went over to the head-office of the works, where we saw the money locked up in a strong room, with a sepoy guard. A *hookum* was then sent off to the six gang *mohurrirs* to assemble. (A gang *mohurrir* is a head-man in charge of 1000 workers.) In a very short time they arrived with their proper badges of office, and were told that they would have to

[1] Children.

pay the workers. The gang *mohurrirs* then went to the head-clerk, and each drew from him a wooden box containing fifty rupees' worth of copper coin. The *mohurrir* knows exactly how much his whole pay-sheet comes to, and opening the box, he extracts the difference between his pay-sheet and his fifty rupees, say *exempli gratia* two rupees, seven annas. This balance he gives back to the head-clerk's subordinate, who gives him a receipt. Here then in one minute he has the right amount of coin for his whole 1000 souls. He sets his underlings to work, and they count out the exact amount wanted by each of his twenty gang-mates. This he has from a special register. The exact sums are then put into numbered bags, which correspond with the gang-mate's badge from one to twenty. A bugle is then sounded, the gang-mates assemble, each gets his bag, which he verifies and signs for. They then, at another given signal, go off and pay their gangs down to the veriest baby in arms, a native writer checking each pay-sheet. The money of absentees is handed back, and *voilà tout.*

As I said, at eleven o'clock we went to the head-office, saw the money taken out and the boxes opened, and the whole process from start to finish did not absorb two hours. The whole affair is really so simple, and yet so rapid, that the various subordinates have not time to falsify their accounts. Again, too, the whole 6000 were paid simultaneously, and this prevented false representation and personification, a fruitful source of gain in other places; but even the wily Hindoo cannot be in two places at once. At the start a Babu had tried peculation, but was at once found out, and, *pour décourager les autres,* he was at once tied up to the triangles and

given a sound flogging. The stick is the only method of appeal to an animal that would condescend to fill his pockets at the expense of his starving brethren. The measure, though perhaps somewhat stringent, was salutary, and after that no more frauds were attempted.

There was a story extant in the North-West, which is said to be true. It speaks well for the harmonious working of the various officials. The scare of the plague in Bombay had reached these remote regions, and the most strenuous efforts were made to prevent the introduction of the disease into the densely-populated cities of the plains of Upper India. Well, one day an *ekka* with a closely muffled-up figure of a woman approached a city-gate. The sepoy on guard stopped the vehicle, and the driver halted. Whether it was the sudden jerk of the stoppage or not I cannot say, but at any rate the woman fell off the *ekka* on to the roadway. The sepoy went to pick her up, as she lay there immovable, when he discovered that it was a corpse, and one which was simply rotten from bubonic plague. He at once sent for the magistrate; in the meantime the driver had left all and fled. The magistrate hurried down to the spot, and ordered an immediate holocaust to be made of the whole affair, corpse, pony, vehicle and all; which was done. In due course he went to report the case to his chief, who listened quietly to the recountal, and then merely added, "*Pity the driver escaped!*"

When we had finished the works, the Commissioner and I drove on to the poor-house, but there was nothing of much interest to record. The place was well-managed and clean, and there were a large number of inmates, but chiefly of the professional mendicant class, with the other waifs and strays of the city population. When I

got back to my hotel I found a note from Mr. Dobbs, the private secretary, saying that Sir Anthony Macdonald would be happy to grant me an interview at one o'clock on the following day, if I would call at Government House. I must, however, reserve my meeting with his Honour for another chapter. I dined with the Commissioner that night, and met Mr. Stoker, a brother of Bram Stoker. He was secretary to the famine, and, in addition to favouring me with a series of well-told and amusing stories, gave me a fund of useful information about the famine, which I found of great ultimate advantage.

CHAPTER XXVIII

SIR ANTHONY MACDONALD AT HOME

THE heading of this chapter is appropriate in more senses than one, for I doubt if there is any one in India who is more at home with the famine question than the Lieutenant-Governor of the North-West Provinces. I was much more fortunate than my colleagues "the Specials," who had preceded me, and, though I too made my request for an interview, I doubted very much if it would be granted. Imagine my surprise when I got the invitation from his Honour's private secretary mentioned in the preceding chapter. Armed with my note-book, I drove to Government House, and after a chat with Mr. Dobbs was ushered into the "presence." Sir Anthony Macdonald was seated at his table surrounded naturally with piles of official papers. The present Lieutenant-Governor is a man of medium size, but of fairly stout build, with a massive head, betokening great brain-power. The walls of his large room were simply plastered with maps, plans, etc., and I was introduced to these more particularly later. His Honour chatted a few moments with me about various topics. I explained to him my mission, saying that I always made a point of coming to the fountain-head as invariably the best source of information. I then opened my note-book, after the most approved fashion

of that curse of modern society, the interviewer. I opened fire with the question whether there was any famine in the North-West Provinces? This, as I thought it would, put Sir Anthony on his mettle, and like a war-horse scenting the battle, he replied, "Perhaps you had better let me tell you something about the famine." Then he began one of the most masterly expositions upon the subject of famine that it has ever been my fortune to listen to. As our American cousins would say, "he sailed right in." I did my best to follow him, and tried verbatim reporting, but what with the Hindustanee terms, the technical words, and column after column of figures, which Sir Anthony reeled off to illustrate, elucidate, or clench a point in his lecture, I shut up my book in despair, and tried to absorb it as much mentally as I could. It was impossible for me, however, to load my mind with the mass of figures, facts, and statistics which his Honour rattled off as if it had been the mere multiplication table.

The following is but the veriest skeleton of the admirable lecture with which Sir Anthony favoured me, illustrated and emphasized, and in fact rammed home, by frequent excursions from the table to the series of excellent maps of the various districts of the provinces which hung round the room.

Since last year it seemed the Lieutenant-Governor and his staff in several parts of the provinces had been quietly and unostentatiously grappling with the famine question. In the original forecast, the area of distress was expected to be contained in a parallelogram described by the four points, Muttra, Phillibit, Rewah and Gorakhpur. Rain, however, fortunately fell in December, and decreased the area; the worst-affected parts now

were the divisions of Lucknow, Allahabad, Bundelkund and Benares. In these parts there could be no hope of respite till the next *kharif* crop (garnered in September); and the Government of the North-West Provinces expected to have upon its hands till that time more than a million people. The high-water mark of the first stage of the famine was reached when the total number of persons relieved reached the enormous total of a million and three-quarters. Since that, with the approach and actual reaping of the *rabi*, a certain proportion of the people had been drawn off from the works for a short time. The second stage had now been entered on, and though in places the numbers to be relieved would decrease, yet in the black spots the Government could hope for no alleviation of the distress, and it expected to have more than half the total population of these parts receiving State aid in some shape or other.

The following was the programme, which had been laid down and was being effectually carried out. In the first place employment is found by the Public Works Department for all able to work. Secondly, gratuitous relief is provided for all those unable to work. The poor-houses in the North-West system were merely organized receiving-houses, in which homeless, destitute people were kept, and in which waifs and strays can find temporary help, till it can be ascertained where they come from, and they can then be sent to their homes, or if not homes, *places d'origine*. The system of village relief had been brought to a considerable degree of perfection, under the excellent administration of the authorities, and it might well serve as a model, from the use of which other portions of India, were

they to adopt it, would derive no small degree of benefit. Briefly the system is this—

On arrival in a village the inspecting-officer calls together a *Panch* (a council of five), which generally consists of the *kotwal* and four other most important personages in the community. A census of the entire village is then taken, the whole of the male inhabitants being mustered. It is found by experience that the people when assembled instinctively fall into groups, which enables and simplifies classification.

Firstly, all those who do not receive or require relief are separated from the rest; in fact they do this of their own accord. Secondly, the status of the *purdah nashin* women is carefully gone into, and their wants attended to by the *Panch*. A number of the other inhabitants may be found to be away on relief works, and so the process of selection and elimination is proceeded with, till eventually it is found that perhaps about a score or so of people are evident and proper recipients of charitable aid. These are duly tabulated and registered, and the *patwari* (head-man) of the village is made responsible for the production of these persons in a fit and suitable condition of boldily health whenever called upon to do so by the inspecting-officer.

The system of inspection has been brought down to such a degree of excellence and order, that the inhabitants of every village in the provinces come under the eye of a competent inspecting-officer at least once in every ten days. There were 243,000 persons at that time receiving gratuitous village relief, so this was no slight task or number to deal with.

Sir Anthony, after this slight digression to explain the village system, resumed the leading question of the famine.

The second stage of the famine would begin in the month of April, and was expected to end in the month of July. It would be a stage of smaller dimension territorially, but would be increased largely in intensity, and would be exposed to cholera epidemics, which indeed had already begun. In reply to a question as to what precautions or preventions would be undertaken against this disease, his Honour said—"We have duly considered and thrashed out, I think fairly successfully, this question. Should cholera appear, the works where it breaks out will be at once broken up and abandoned, and the healthy persons will be given money and sent to their homes, where they will be engaged upon works of local interest and importance, such as village sanitation and the improvement of the drinking-water supply—one of the crying evils of rural India, and one which does more to foster deformity and disease than the other ills to which the Indian ryot is heir by lot, inheritance and choice. Previous experience has shown that after the reaping of the *rabi*, there is a distinct diminution of the numbers on relief works, but a notable increase in the number seeking charitable and gratuitous relief, and this will continue till September. You know, I suppose, the failure of the *kharif* means the cutting-off of the daily bread of the masses, as the *rabi* crops are the better kind of grains, which are cultivated mainly for export-purposes and not for home consumption, so that the lack of *kharif* in the North-West means the absence of abundant food-stuff for the masses for the twelve months following the failure of the crop."

I next questioned his Honour as to what were his intentions with regard to seed-grain.

He replied that previous experience had shown that

it was to the interest of the *bannia* that the ground should be seeded, and that the grain would be forthcoming at the appointed time. The question, however, of supplying the ruined peasantry with plough-bullocks on the arrival of the rains was one absorbing the whole interest and faculties of the Government; and if they were not to hand, as they must be, it would involve the throwing out of cultivation of an immense area of cultivable territory. The English funds, he added, ought to be employed to a very large extent for this purpose—the rehabilitation of a ruined and unfortunate peasantry.

His Honour then touched upon the question of orphans. It seems that the greater part of these are abandoned at the first pinch, but when the pressure is relieved a large proportion are handed back to their friends and relations, who claim them. Only the residuum of real orphans are handed over to the missionaries, with a Government allowance for their proper maintenance till they are of a fit age to grapple with the ills of life. As a final word, Sir Anthony, in wishing me good-bye, said that the Government in his provinces were duly tackling the question as to what was the best method of applying the funds raised in England for the penniless and suffering Indian; he was himself, as he said, in favour of the purchase of cattle, and he was just about to attend a council meeting at which this question was the principal one upon the agenda.

I took my leave, and left the presence, simply dripping with famine statistics at every pore.

I may say, in conclusion, that the North-West Provinces accomplished much; and it is owing to the promptitude with which their repressive measures were

adopted and carried out, that, though the pressure was perhaps even severer there than in the Central Provinces, the butcher's bill was not a tenth of that in Central India. There was, of course, mortality, but the North-West Executive stopped at an early stage, by their excellent system of village relief, what is always the first natural instinct of the aboriginal, to "up stick and away," and go wandering over the face of the earth. They become then mere nameless atoms of humanity, and die by the roadside unaccounted for, or perhaps even unburied.

CHAPTER XXIX

ALLAHABAD

ON my way down to Allahabad, I made a diversion for a couple of days and stopped at Cawnpur. I did not find any famine of a serious character here, and so employed the time at my disposal in visiting the city and the places made memorable by the Massacre of the Innocents at the time of the Mutiny. Cawnpur has achieved another notoriety apart from being the scene of the brutal murder of the Europeans, and has built up for itself the reputation of being the most prosperous manufacturing city of India. It is in fact a judicious mixture of Manchester, Nottingham, and Birmingham rolled into one. There are very extensive cotton and cloth weaving mills, the manufacture of canvas and tents for civil and military purposes being a speciality of the Elgin Mills. Then again, the Cawnpur saddlery and harness is known all over India for its cheapness and good workmanship. The Government has established a very large boot factory, from which all our sepoys and a great number of the British regiments receive their ammunition boots. In a word, Cawnpur is a very prosperous city, and its commercial importance is steadily increasing.

I saw a curious sight while strolling about the environs of the native city. A camel belonging to the native

regiment was bringing the money for the payment of the soldiers from the Currency-office. It became frightened, I suppose, at the rattling of the bags of money which composed its load, and bolted. The *karkoon*, who was in charge of the money, and the sepoy driver tried their best to stop the mad career of the huge, unwieldy beast, but to no avail. The panic-stricken, "bubbling, snaky-headed *oont*" would pay no heed, and being still more frightened by the clattering behind it of the troop of sowars who formed the escort, suddenly turned sharp round and bolted up a bank, and at the top turned head-over-heels—an awful operation for a camel—and chucked *pies* and riders nearly into another world. The wreck was finally assorted, and the camel reloaded, but nothing would induce the *karkoon*—and in that I commend his discretion—to mount the treacherous quadruped again.'

At Allahabad, one of the first things I did was to call upon Mr. Palmer, who was the superintending engineer in charge of the Famine Relief Public Works of the North-West Provinces and Oudh, and he furnished me with a great deal of useful information. He informed me that the famine was spread over an area larger in itself than the afflicted parts of the Punjaub, and one too that was much more densely populated. In the *tahsil* of Bara, out of a population of a little over 60,000, more than half that number were in receipt of relief. The total number receiving relief in the provinces was roughly a million and a quarter, and out of the forty-eight districts which go to make up the provinces, only eleven were free from famine. We then got on to the question of cholera, which was troubling him very much in some parts of the districts. The



A DHOOLIE.

outbreak of cholera is always more or less expected, but curiously enough the disease, instead of appearing in districts where the water-supply was poor, and where it was naturally expected that the epidemic would show itself first, had chosen an opposite course, and was ravaging districts with a good water-supply, and where it had not been anticipated. Mr. Palmer said cholera might be compared to a Chinese cracker, as it exploded in the most unlikely places, and it was almost impossible to track its sporadic and erratic course till the mischief had been done.

He then told me an experience of his a couple of days previously, which will show how the capacity of the native for hoarding and scraping together cannot even in times of such distress be eradicated.

He was riding alone to visit some works, when he came upon a native in the last stage of emaciation and exhaustion, and evidently *in extremis* from privation and want of food. By his side was a pile of the common brass dishes out of which the country folk eat their food. There were some seventeen or eighteen of these, and they represented a market value of some eight or ten rupees. Mr. Palmer at once rode off to the nearest *kotwali* (police-station) to obtain help, a *dhoolie* and bearers, with the intention of taking the sufferer to the hospital at the works. On his return the man was dead. From subsequent inquiry, it was found that this old man had out of his famine relief-pay, by starving himself, contrived to scrape up a few rupees, and with these he had started to buy from his more impecunious neighbours their eating- and cooking-pots, out of which he hoped to make an ultimate profit. He had, however, died from exhaustion during the operation. In the

absence of Mr. Palmer the whole pile had disappeared, and this poor old man had sacrificed his life for the sake of the gain of a few paltry *pies.*

One of the works of the relief series was the excavation of a huge tank at Janakigang, on which there were at the time of my visit some 5000 coolies at work. An area of about half a square mile was being dug out to a depth of ten or twelve feet. The huge spoil-heaps surround three sides of the square, and the other is left open for the entrance of the surface-water, which will in the rains be dammed up and stored. There were certainly several very bad cases of emaciation amongst the workers, but the average condition of the people was fair. The rate of wages given at this particular work was—

Gangsmen	9 pies.
Diggers	7 „
Weaker men and lads	5 „
Women carriers	5 „
Children 12—16 years	4 „
„ 7—12 „	3 „
Babies up to seven	2 „
„ in arms	1 „

The Allahabad poor-house contained some 1400 souls, and here too were several terribly bad cases. Attached to this is the orphanage, where the numbers were nearly 300, a sure sign of the distress prevalent in the district.

I found at the hotel my friend Mr. Rice, whom I had left at Agra. We arranged to visit the fort, which is one of the sights of Allahabad. It stands some four miles outside the city, at the junction of the Ganges and the Jumna. It forms a striking object on the river-bank. The walls are from twenty to twenty-five feet high. Inside the fort is that curious monolith called

Asoka's pillar; it is about fifty feet above ground, and highly polished. On it are inscribed the edicts of Asoka (*circa* 240 B.C.), and also a record of the victories of Gupta in the second century. There is one of these relics of the age of Asoka at Janagad in Kathiawar, which was rescued from oblivion by the late prime minister of the State, who, when I was visiting the place some few years ago, took me to see this curiosity, which lies at the foot of the sacred mountain of Girnir. The most curious phenomenon, however, in the fort is the *Akshai Bar*, or undecaying tree. At one corner of the square is a flight of a few steps leading underground, and here you find a few sleek Brahmins who exploit this marvel. On your arrival you are conducted down the stair, and at the bottom an attendant lights a rude lamp, which consists of a mere wick of cotton floating in a rude earthen vessel full of rancid cocoa-nut oil, and which not only gives off a sickly smell, but also fills the underground passages with fetid fumes of smoke. You are then taken slowly round, and shown the collection of idols, gods, and heroes which pious hands have collected here. One is then brought to the holy of holies, the sacred shrine, where in old days the tree was surrounded by the bones of the pilgrims who had sacrificed their lives on the sacred spot. The tree itself consists of a trunk, the bottom of which is placed, planted, or *grows* (?), in the altar erected at its foot, while the join at the top is carefully concealed with a fringe of tawdry, Indian, tinselled drapery. What with the lamps, the presence of the numerous pious Hindoos, and the odour of decaying flowers, one does not care to stay too long in this underground shrine, so having duly placed our propitiatory *oboli* in the dish ready to receive

impartially the alms and offerings of the devout and the unbeliever, we sought the upper air. On our passage upward we were shown a hole in the wall, which was said to be an underground passage to Benares. Neither Rich nor myself thought of availing ourselves of this route, as the railway seemed to be more in accordance with our modern notions.

Talking of Benares puts me in mind of a good story which my artist friend, who had come just from the sacred city, told me. About two or three months ago an American globe-trotter had done the usual rush through India, and had had among other things, by means of an interpreter, an interview with the famous ascetic of that place. When Rich came, he as usual got into talk with the man, who produced from his waist-belt a type-written letter, with a heading done in the usual American lithographic style. This letter, which the *guru* asked Rich to translate, came from this smart American. He said in his whole tour he had enjoyed nothing so much as his talk with the hermit, and in conclusion begged to enclose his business card. He was a dry goods store-keeper. If you will look at the picture of the holy man—who will deny that the Yankee trader whips the world?

With such converse we walked round the ramparts, and saw the confluence of the Ganges and Jumna. The former is one and a half miles broad, flowing from the north, while the Jumna from the west is about half-a-mile across. The mingling of the two rivers presents a curious phenomenon, as the Ganges is of a muddy yellow colour, while the Jumna is blue; for a short distance the two streams keep distinct before they merge. It reminded me of the entrance of the Rhone into the Lake of Geneva, where the contrast between the



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colour of the river and the water of the lake is strongly marked, and continues for a long distance down the lake. On the ground by the river-bank is held yearly an enormous *Mela*, or fair, at which annually assemble over a million of pilgrims to bathe in the sacred streams. The worship of water, as we all know, plays a very important part in the ritual of Hinduism, and in a country like Hindustan this worship of the life-giving element is by no means incongruous. I had received an invitation from the sub-editor of the *Pioneer* to dine, and we had a long cosy chat in his sanctum afterwards. It was "budget-night" of the paper, or in other words the staff was very busy setting up and bringing out the financial statement of the Government for the year 1896-97.

My work was now done, and I had nothing but to get back to Bombay. It had originally been intended that I should go on to Bengal and do the Dharbhanga and other districts afflicted there. The Cretan crisis, however, was in full blast, and absorbing the interest of the British public; and so my tour ended at Allahabad.

I append here an extract from the *Pioneer* of February 24, which deals with the Bengal distress; and may add that the native State of Dharbhanga was sorely afflicted, but that, owing to the efforts of its enlightened and energetic ruler, the people were well looked after, and the distress mitigated, if not entirely destroyed.

"As regards famine in Bengal, public attention so far had been directed mainly to Behar, but there has been distress also in the districts of Nadia and Khulna. From a letter sent by the local Government to the Government of India, it appears that the area affected in Khulna is only 442 square miles in extent, with a population of 262,000 persons. Nearly the whole of this area is land

reclaimed from the Sunderbunds, and intersected by tidal rivers and channels, forming a network of waterways. The people rely upon the winter rice-crop for their food for the year, and rain is mainly useful in washing the salt from the soil. The fields are protected against the inroads of the sea by embankments, and the local landowners seem to have neglected their duty in maintaining these. The result has been that in some parts, where the rainfall was deficient, the soil would yield nothing. A tidal wave, in October 1895, had injured most of the cultivated land, so that the people are now suffering from the effects of two bad seasons. The winter rice-crop failed altogether in portions of two subdivisions, and as no *rabi* is grown, food-supplies are short. The distress is not acute, however, and local traders are importing grain. The Government have had test relief works open for some time past, and the district officers are quite ready with their plans of relief should they be needed. In Nadia distress is said to be spreading, and an area of 815 square miles, with a population of 428,000, is affected. Here, again, the winter crops failed altogether, and the *rabi* harvest is likely to be scanty. As a large proportion of the population consists of landless labourers and poor cultivators, relief must be given freely. Some 10,000 persons are now on the works or receiving gratuitous relief. Elsewhere in Bengal, there is some distress in Palamau, Manbhum, Puri, but the position is nowhere serious. In all districts, however, the poorer classes are feeling the effect of high prices, and these will not drop until the people take more kindly to Burma rice, which is beginning to find its way to most markets in Bengal."—*Pioneer*, February 24, 1897.

CHAPTER XXX

HOMEWARD BOUND

My mission being now ended with my visit to Allahabad, my next move was to make arrangements for my return on the cars across India to Bombay. Allahabad is some 850 miles from Bombay, and on the map the journey looks nothing, but it takes thirty-eight hours to accomplish. This time spent in being baked in a train on the plains of Central India is at best a mediocre sort of amusement, and I had had almost enough of railway travelling. For sixty-seven days I had been a wanderer on the face of the earth, and was excessively glad to get back to my ark in Bombay.

On Friday, March 19, in the afternoon, I got into the Bombay Mail at Allahabad, and arrived in that beautiful city on the Sunday morning. Directly we got into the Central Province Agency the crowds of beggars at the station began. At many places there were several hundreds, and there were at some stations a strong posse of sepoys to restrain them from mobbing the train. In an earlier portion of my book, in talking of a native not eating English bread, I said that not one in a hundred would break his caste in this way. I saw at one station the exception that proves the rule. The driver got down from his engine and placed a large hunk of bread on the platform. A poor weird and

bony youth, about fifteen, stealthily crept up to this treasure, and in a moment it had disappeared into some inner recess or hiding-place in the rags with which he was clothed, or rather unclothed.

At Sutna, where we stopped for dinner, John Chinaman, the manager of the refreshment-rooms, gave us a capital dinner.

I have travelled now, I think, on every railway system of India, and I can confidently assert that in the Great Indian Peninsular Railway the comforts of the passengers are less regarded than on any other line. You can tell in a moment when you strike this line by increased discomfort and the general badness of the food, etc. which you consume *en route*. One instance will serve.

On nearly all the other lines of India, at any rate on the mail-trains, there is a compartment reserved for the sale of ice and aerated waters; this is an immense convenience to passengers, as no one who has not had an Indian railway thirst can appreciate what a luxury a cold soda can be. We had of course our ice and soda shop as far as Jubbulpur, but directly we struck the G. I. P. this convenience ceased, and the next evening about five o'clock, wanting a soda, my boy brought me one that was nearly red-hot.

Another growl. Why should one have to wait till ten o'clock at night to get one's dinner at Munmar, when a dining-place might be arranged higher up the line at a more reasonable hour?

Well, even a railway journey must end some time or other, and in due course I landed at the *Bori-Bandar* (Victoria terminus) at Bombay.

I had spent five solid consecutive years in India, and thought it time to run home to see my friends and



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relations. My passage was booked on the old *Peninsular*, and in due course I was on board, *en route* for England, home and beauty. It is said that one of the best signs of a successful agriculturist is the fact of his being able to make two blades of grass grow where previously there was only one, or perhaps none. How much more then, as Euclid says, must the speculative enterprise of that enormous passenger-carrying corporation be eulogized which has solved so successfully for itself the problem of putting three passengers in the space only fit for two! Our ship was the last of the "plague ships," as they were called, and we were under the strictest quarantine at every port we touched. The passengers who went right round extracted a certain amount of amusement in exaggerating the horrors of the disinfecting process carried on by the authorities at Brindisi. We promulgated the idea that it was very trying to the system, and that persons who were even slightly touched with alcoholic poisoning were likely to succumb under the ordeal. Several hard-livers swore off for several days previous to their disembarkation on that lone Italian shore.

Our voyage home was uneventful, except that the skipper had the bad luck to poke his ship's nose into a storm every time we turned a corner.

At Malta those passengers who were simply suffering from suppressed shopping mania were able to land at the *Lazaretto*, and get rid of the coin that had been burning in their pockets for the last fortnight. It was a strange sight, a long white-washed room with a double barrier, behind which were on one side the anxious English buyers, and on the other the calm but crafty Maltese sellers. If you took a fancy to anything, you

pointed to the article in question, and after the usual haggling the article was handed to you with a long pair of tongs, and the filthy lucre, which you placed in a receptacle like the old-fashioned collecting-box, was then immediately dropped in a pail of water very strongly impregnated with carbolic.

It is said that he who sups with his Satanic majesty needs a long spoon, but he or she who shopped with a Maltese under these disadvantageous circumstances must needs have a long purse. After the Maltese diversion, where we were again filled up with men home on short leave, in due course we dropped anchor at Plymouth, and once more one's foot was upon British soil and at home.

Let me here take my leave and write—

FINIS.

APPENDIX A

SOME EXTRACTS FROM THE STATISTICAL GOVERNMENT REPORTS FOR THE LATTER END OF THE MONTH OF FEBRUARY

THE BOMBAY PRESIDENCY.

THE appended progress statement of relief measures during the week under report, shows a decrease of 7962 in the daily average number (237,057) of relief workers as compared with the previous week, but returns for some works in the Poona district have not been received. A new metal-collecting work has been opened in the Ahmednagar district. One small work has been started in Khandesh, and a sum of Rs. 6000 has been allotted for it. Proposals have been submitted to Government regarding a project for a storage reservoir on the Pravara river in the Ahmednagar district, and pending the preparation of detailed plans and estimates, authority has been given to commence such portions of the work as are suitable and needed for famine relief. The work is expected eventually to give employment to about 25,000 people. Government have had under their consideration a scheme for the employment of distressed weavers in making coarse cotton cloth to be used for the covering of relief-workers' huts, kitchens, and poor-houses in place of bamboo-matting. The scheme has been approved, subject to the following conditions:—

(1) That coarse cloth is about as suitable as bamboo-matting for the purpose for which it is intended;

(2) That the excess cost, if any, is probably not

greater than the excess of cost of employing weavers on ordinary works over the value of the work they will do on them;

(3) That the course suggested is not likely to bring the bamboo-matting makers into as great difficulty as the weavers are in;

(4) That structures which are not really needed are not made on this account.

From further reports received from officers of the Sanitary Department regarding the inspection of relief camps in the Ahmednagar, Nasik, and Bijapur districts, it appears that the general health of the workers and their condition continues to be satisfactory. On one of the works in Bijapur there were fifty female weavers, who were specially examined, and found to be in good health. The attention of the district officers has been drawn to certain defects in the sanitary arrangements at the camps.

The number of persons gratuitously relieved in villages or poor-houses during the week under report was 16,402, as compared with 13,128 in the preceding week. A further amount of Rs. 15,000 has been placed at the disposal of the Collector of Poona for expenditure on gratuitous relief, including doles to inferior village servants. Allotments of Rs. 15,000 and Rs. 8700 have also been sanctioned for kitchens in Poona and Khandesh respectively. Authority has been given to give jowari instead of flour, and the grain equivalent of the other items constituting the dole prescribed in Section 107 of the Famine Code, where such a course is found to be expedient.

An extra assignment of Rs. 15,000 has been made for takavi advances in the Kolaba district. The first instalment (Rs. 75,000) of a loan of three lacs of rupees applied for by the Administrator of the Jath State for expenditure on relief measures in that State, has been made available out of the funds at the disposal of this Government. The Collectors of the affected districts have been authorized under Section 145 (*b*) of the Code to confer on ordinary Mamlatdars and Mahalkaris the powers of a sub-divisional officer under the rules relating to takavi loans.

NUMBERS EMPLOYED ON RELIEF WORKS

District.	Number and class of relief or test works.	Number of persons employed on relief or test works.	Number of non-working children whose parents are employed on relief works, including women in charge, and other dependents.	Daily average number of persons relieved gratuitously in villages.
		Daily average number.	Daily average number.	Daily average number.
Bijapur	Fifteen Relief works under Public Agency	59,669	22,162	[1]
	Six Relief works under Civil Agency (including two Local Boards and Municipal works)	1,480	368	
Sholapur	Twenty Relief works under Public Works Agency	62,437	32,140	6,138 (in 30 vil.)
	One Relief work under Civil Agency	85	...	
Ahmednagar	Nineteen Relief works under Public Works Agency	47,244	25,488	796 (in 402 vil.)
Poona ...	Four Relief works under Public Works Agency	5,990	2,966	2,776 (in 137 vil.)
	Seven Relief works under Civil Agency	79	...	
Nasik	Twelve Relief works under Public Works Agency	13,953	7,017	112 (in 5 vil.)
Satara	Six Relief works under Public Works Agency	21,209	4,404	13 (in 8 vil.)
Khandesh	Seven Relief works under Public Works Agency	15,551	6,424	...
	Five Relief works under Civil Agency	4,786	1,774	...
	Three Ordinary works used as Relief works [2]	2,318	1,525	...
Belgaum	Two Relief works under Public Works Agency	2,095	641	351 (in 30 vil.)
	One Test work under Public Works Agency	124	70	...
	Two Local Board and Municipal works under Civil Agency	37	...	...

[1] 6175 (in 677 villages), including 1394 relieved by Municipalities.
[2] Including two Local Fund works.

The Police Force in the Bijapur, Sholapur, and Belgaum districts has been further strengthened, and an Assistant Superintendent of Police has been temporarily appointed for duty in the Bijapur district.

Bombay.—Rain fell in the Upper Sindh frontier. The standing crops have been slightly damaged by drought in three talukas of Karachi, by locusts in two of Karachi, by frost in two of Karachi and three of Hyderabad; otherwise they are thriving in Sindh and Gujerat, but indifferent elsewhere. Crops recently sown have withered, or are withering, in Nasik, Ratnagiri, Poona, Ahmednagar, Sholapur, Belgaum, and Dharwar. Autumn harvesting has been completed except in Khandesh. Reaping of the late crops has commenced in Panch Mahals, Broach, Surat, Thana, Khandesh, Nasik, Ahmednagar, Sholapur, Satara, Bijapur, and Dharwar. Fodder is sufficient except in the Deccan, Karnatak, Shikarpur, and parts of Karachi and Baroda. The grain supply is generally sufficient in the affected districts. Cotton-picking continues in Broach, Surat, and Rajkot. The condition of the agricultural stock is deteriorating in Poona, Ahmednagar, Sholapur, and Bijapur; but is healthy elsewhere, except in parts of Sindh, Khandesh, Nasik, Ratnagiri, and Kanara. Prices are rising in parts of Kolaba, Ratnagiri, Poona, and Sholapur; falling in parts of Kolaba, Poona, Sholapur, and Bijapur; stationary in Surat and in parts of Poona and Bijapur. The prices of staple food-grains in the affected districts are—Dharwar, 13¾; Belgaum, 11½; Sholapur, 11; Bijapur, 10¾; Ahmednagar, 10½; Poona, 10; Nasik and Satara, 9¾; Khandesh, 9½; Kolaba, 8¾ seers per rupee.

THE PUNJAUB.*

Hissar.—Fodder stock exhausted; condition of cattle very bad. Prices high. Gram, 9½ seers; jowari, 10 seers. Canal crops in fair condition. Prospects average; stocks of grain exhausted, grain being imported from Sindh.

	Men.	Women.	Children.
Relief workers	12,678	12,445	9,053
Dependents	307	379	8,466
Relieved in poor-houses	38	29	50
Other relief	830	967	442

Rohtak.—Fodder getting scarce and dear. Prices slightly rising. Wheat, 8 seers; jowari, 9½ seers. Crops on well and canal lands in good condition, except on brackish wells of Jhajjar. Rain much wanted. Strong westerly wind blew throughout the week. Canal irrigated crops likely to suffer therefrom. Stocks of food-grains seem sufficient.

Gurgaon.—Fodder and condition of cattle fair. Wheat, 8 seers; bajra, 8½ seers. Extra spring sowings continue in parts. Late dry land crops suffering from high west winds and want of rain.

Delhi.—Fodder scarce, condition of cattle poor. Crops on irrigated area fair. Unirrigated suffering from want of rain. Stocks are being exhausted, but imports are meeting requirements.

Karnal.—Fodder scarce in parts. Wheat 7½ seers; gram, 8¾; maize, 9 seers. Prospects on irrigated land good, but on dry land poor. Ploughings for extra spring crops.

Umballa.—Supply of fodder sufficient. Condition of cattle good. Crops generally in good condition.

Jullundur.—Supply of fodder scarce. Prices abnormally high, and still rising. Wheat, 8¾ seers; gram, 10 seers; maize, 11¾ seers. Prospects of the rabi crop favourable. Standing crops fair. Stocks of grain reduced but not insufficient.

Ludhiana.—About 150 employed upon test works.

Ferozepur.—Supply of fodder and condition of cattle fair. Damage still reported to rape and gram crops by caterpillar (sundi); stocks of food-grain sufficient.

Mooltan.—Supply of fodder scarce in parts. Prices high, condition of crops average.

Lahore.—Scarce in parts, cattle getting lean. Prices high. Ploughing and sowing going on. Condition of crops average. Land is being prepared for kharif autumn crops.

Amritsar.—Supply of fodder scarce, but recent rains will improve. Condition of cattle good. Prices high. Wheat, 8¾ seers; maize, 11 seers. Stocks of food-grain insufficient with cultivators.

Sialkot.—Supply of green fodder improving. Condition of cattle average. Prospects good, extra spring crops being sown.

Gujerat.—Average number of relief workers, 31,108; dependents, 18,290; otherwise relieved, 1,292. Maize-flour, 8 seers.

Gujranwalla.—Supply of fodder scarce, cattle getting lean. Sowings of extra spring crops going on. Standing crops doing well. Stocks low with zemindars; ploughings commenced.

Shahpur.—Supply of fodder scarce, cattle out of condition. Prices rising; rain needed.

Rawul Pindi.—Supply of fodder insufficient, except in Murree. Prices falling. Prospects good; stocks of grain sufficient.

Peshawur.—Supply of fodder sufficient; condition of cattle good. Prices rising. Prospects improved. Sowings of extra spring crops are in progress. Stocks of food-grain average.

Dera Ismail Khan.—Supply of fodder scarce; cattle generally lean. Prices high. Conditions of standing crops average. Rain wanted.

GENERAL REMARKS.

No rain. Prices are generally high, and are showing a tendency to rise again in most districts; they remained stationary in Mooltan, Lahore, Sialkot and Rawul Pindi districts. Wheat is selling from 7½ to 10 seers, gram 8¾ to 10½, bulrush millet 8¾ to 11½, great millet 9½ to 11, and maize 9 to 11¾ seers per rupee. Ploughings and sowings of extra spring crops in progress. Land is being prepared for the next autumn. Irrigated crops are generally reported in good condition, except in parts of Rohtak, where well-water is brackish. Prospects are said to be good to average. Crops on dry land are still suffering from want of more rain in certain districts. More rain is still wanted in the Delhi division as well as in the Shahpur and Dera Ismail Khan districts. The stock of grain has been exhausted in Hissar and Delhi, where imports are meeting requirements. The stock with the cultivators of Amritsar and Gujranwalla is insufficient. Rape and gram crops are still being damaged by caterpillars (sundi) in Ferozepur. Westerly winds are blowing in the Rohtak and Gurgaon

districts, and are likely to damage the crops. Cattle are generally reported in poor condition. They are said to be good to fair in Gurgaon, Umballa, Ferozepur, Amritsar, and Sialkot. Six cattle died of starvation in Rohtak. Fodder is sufficient in Umballa, and scarce elsewhere. The average daily number of relief workers and dependents are as follows:—

	Men.	Women.	Children.
Relief workers	18,452	18,028	12,212
Dependents	325	416	9,426
Relieved in poor-houses	348	349	247
Otherwise relieved ...	2,037	2,448	1,101
Test workers	266	152	120

In addition to the above, the number for which the details are given by the District Officer is as follows:—Relief workers, 31,108; dependents, 18,290; and otherwise relieved, 1292. The total number of workers, dependents, etc., in this province was 116,000, against 110,000 last week.

Prices of staple food-grain on which famine is reckoned.—Rohtak, gram 10 and great millet 11 seers; Gurgaon, bulrush millet 8¾, and Delhi 8½; Karnal, gram 8¾, maize 9; Umballa, maize 10; Ferozepur, great millet 12; Mooltan, wheat 9½; Lahore, wheat 10 and maize 10½; Gujerat, maize flour 8 seers per rupee.

THE FAMINE IN THE NORTH-WEST PROVINCES

MEERUT DIVISION.

Dehra Dun.—There is sufficient demand for labour in Dehra tahsil; agriculturists in the southern khatts of Jaunsar-Bawar have benefited by the rainfall during the month. The general outlook has much improved during the month.

Saharanpur.—The condition of the agricultural and labouring population is fairly good, and there is at present sufficient work for labourers in cutting and pressing sugar-cane.

Muzaffarnagar.—The condition of the labouring and agricultural classes is fair.

Meerut.—Labour is abundant. Irrigation of rabi and sugar-cane pressing are causing great demand for labour.

Bulandshahr.—The condition of the labouring and agricultural population is fair. High prices of staples are generally complained of.

Aligarh.—The condition of the labouring and agricultural population is fair.

AGRA DIVISION.

Muttra.—There is very little work to be had, and the number of labourers on relief works is increasing very much. So far many cultivators have not been driven on to the works. Pressure of scarcity is distinctly on the increase.

Agra.—Landlords and agricultural tenants are fairly well off. Small artisans and hired labourers are for the most part in want of employment, and have begun flocking to the relief works.

Farukhabad.—The condition of the poorer classes is not satisfactory. Labourers are provided with work on test relief and intermediate relief works. The condition of the agricultural population is satisfactory.

Mainpuri.—Agriculturists are busy in field work, and the recent rainfall has put them in heart. The production of carrots and potatoes has also been a relief to them. The small number of labourers at work on the Batesar-Shikohabad road shows that no pressing want is felt yet. Poor-houses have been opened at Mainpuri and Shikohabad for the relief of paupers, and gratuitous relief is being distributed under the Famine Code. These forms of relief are considered sufficient for the present.

Etawah.—The condition of agriculturists, where means of irrigation are available, is excellent. Elsewhere they suffer in general with the other population from the pressure of scarcity. Labourers are getting labour at ordinary or at a little lower rate of wages according to demand, but the demand is not ample everywhere. People have come in large numbers to the relief work, Etawah-Kalpi road.

Etah.—The condition of the agricultural and labouring population is fair at present except in Aliganj tahsil. The labouring classes find plenty of employment in fields throughout Kasganj tahsil, but there is some want of employment in Etah tahsil, and considerable want in Aliganj and part of Jalesar. Test relief works are supplying the necessary employment.

ROHILKHAND DIVISION.

Bareilly.—The late fall of rain has thrown a considerable number of labourers out of employment. Four test works and two poor-houses are open in the district. A fifth test work will probably be started by the middle of this month. The number of labourers on test works on January 31, 1897, was 5238, and the number of inmates in poor-houses was 230. Relief was also afforded to *purdah nashin* women in the city and district from private subscriptions. The condition of the people is generally fair.

Bijnor.—Cultivators and labourers are engaged in cane pressing. At the end of January there was a great rush on poor-houses and test works, probably due to slackness of time and the poorness of the cane crop.

Budaun.—The fall of rain has rendered irrigation less necessary, and thrown a number of agricultural labourers out of employ who are now working on the test works. So far cultivators have not come to these works. Some of the crops will be ripening in about five weeks, after which the present scarcity will largely disappear.

Moradabad.—Cane pressing affords employment to labourers and agriculturists. At the end of the month there were 2428 persons on test works and 394 persons in poor-houses. The numbers will probably increase as work on sugar-cane cutting and pressing ceases.

Shahjahanpur.—The numbers on test works are increasing, and the four existing test works are about to be converted into intermediate works. Relief in other forms is also being distributed.

Pilibhit.—Four test relief works are open with an attendance of some 8000 persons, and the numbers

employed are rising as cane pressing nears its conclusion. Cultivators are not moving from their villages, and the people generally are in good heart, though the high prices of food-grains are severely felt.

ALLAHABAD DIVISION.

Cawnpore.—The condition of the labouring population has become worse, owing to the recent rainfall having checked irrigation and thrown them out of employment.

Fatehpur.—Condition of people is not satisfactory owing to unfavourable season. The agricultural population and labouring classes are generally provided with work on canal and intermediate works. There are three poor-houses open in the district. The high prices of staples form the chief and only cause of general complaint.

Banda.—There is no improvement in the condition of the people. The labouring classes are the greatest sufferers, and the agricultural classes are not much better off than the labouring classes. The high prices are generally felt throughout the district.

Hamirpur.—The labouring population is suffering from high prices and from lack of employment. Six relief works are in progress, and the number employed on them is rapidly increasing. There were 38,400 persons, with 11,219 dependents, on these works on January 30, 1897. Numbers in five poor-houses amounted to 4462, and those relieved under other provisions of the Famine Code to 5920.

Allahabad.—Numbers in need of relief are increasing. On the 30th of the month there were on works under the Public Works Department 103,650 workers with 26,888 dependents. On village works there were 5502 persons. Poor-houses contained 7923 paupers, while about 12,500 persons were relieved under other provisions of the Famine Code.

Jhansi.—The condition of the labouring class is pitiable, but that of the agricultural population is somewhat better. The district is in a most critical state.

Jalaun.—The failure of successive crops and high

prices of food-grains have reduced the agricultural and labouring population to great straits. The distress is rapidly extending, and the numbers on relief works are increasing. There are seven relief works open in the district, and relief is also largely given in other forms.

BENARES DIVISION.

Benares.—Agricultural and labouring population find work, and their condition is satisfactory. Paupers are immigrating from neighbouring districts. Four test relief works have been opened, and they are attracting labourers.

Ghazipur.—Field work and the railway are providing for labourers.

Ballia.—The condition of the agricultural class is fair. Labour is sufficient.

GORAKHPUR DIVISION.

Gorakhpur.—Tahsils Gorakhpur, Bansgaon and Hata in whole, and pargana Haveli of Maharajganj tahsil have already been declared distressed. The remaining two parganas of Maharajganj tahsil and the whole tahsils of Deoria and Padrauna are under observation. Relief works are open in the distressed area, and intermediate works are in progress in the area under observation.

Basti.—Work is generally available, and the condition of labourers and agriculturists is not very bad. There are eight ordinary works with 1977 men as average, and four poor-houses with 1181 inmates.

Azamgarh.—Report not received.

KUMAUN DIVISION.

Almora.—The condition of the labouring and agricultural population is good.

Garhwal.—The condition of the labouring and agricultural population is generally good. There is no apprehension of scarcity owing to the good rains. The

people from the south where the kharif was scanty will probably purchase from the northern parganas where it was good.

Naini Tal.—There is plenty of employment for the labouring and agricultural classes, who, though they feel the high prices of food-grains, yet are not by any means in a bad way.

LUCKNOW DIVISION.

Lucknow.—Distress among the agricultural population was acute. Ten relief works under the control of the Public Works Department are in progress: three in the city and seven in the district. More works will shortly be started. Gratuitous relief under chapters v. and x. of the Famine Code has been distributed in the city and district. Three poor-houses are open. State kitchens are attached to them. The number of inmates in these poor-houses on February 1, 1897, was 2106.

Unao.—The condition of the labouring and agricultural population is not good.

Sitapur.—The condition of the labouring class, as judged from the men coming to relief works, is fair on the whole. Seven relief works were open during the month, and more are about to be opened, as almost all the seven works are full.

Hardoi.—The labouring classes and agriculturists are generally very badly off. No improvement is expected in the current month.

Kheri.—The condition of the labouring classes is not satisfactory. Five works are open in tahsil Mohamdi and two in Lakhimpur tahsil. The total number of persons on them during the month was 28,982.

FYZABAD DIVISION.

Fyzabad.—The condition of the labouring classes necessitates help being afforded to them till the harvest is ripe. Six intermediate works, one District Board test relief work, and a number of village works are open. Numbers on all these works are steadily increasing, as was expected. Numbers in poor-houses

have also increased, but suitable inmates are being drafted to their villages, and relief given to them at their houses.

Gonda.—The pressure brought by the high prices and bad times on the labouring population is greatly relieved by the employment which the people can get on the railway and on intermediate and village works.

Bahraich.—No complaints have been heard regarding the state of the labouring and agricultural population. Labour is available on railway and on roads in all tahsils.

Sultanpur.—There is a continually increasing demand for employment everywhere, met by public and other works. The labouring classes are feeling the pinch and often look pulled down, but there is plenty of employment supplied for them, and there is not much longer to wait now before the rabi harvest is reaped. It is unusually forward everywhere.

Partabgarh.—The condition of the labouring and agricultural population is not very satisfactory. Labouring classes are receiving relief from test works, etc. There are three poor-houses, and three test and four famine relief works open in the district.

Bara Banki.—The agricultural population is hopeful owing to the bright prospects of the rabi crops. Relief works and small village works open all over the district are giving employment to the poorer classes. Numbers employed on relief work during the month were 24,220, and those relieved on small village works were 9366; 1130 persons were relieved in poor-houses, and 1939 persons were in receipt of gratuitous relief.

BENGAL.

Good and general rain fell in Bihar and Chota Nagpur, and showers in North and South-west Bengal. The rain has benefited the standing crops, but has slightly injured the pulses, which are ripe or being harvested. It has also facilitated the ploughing for *aus* (autumn rice) and jute, which is in progress in several districts of Bengal Proper. In Palamau there was a severe storm with hail on the 11th, and some

damage to the spring crops is reported. The pressing of sugar-cane is going on. In the distressed districts the price of the food-grains on which the relief wages are based are—Nadia (common rice) 9 seers, Khulna (common rice) 10 seers, Rajshahi (common rice) 9½ seers, Patna (common rice) 10½ seers, Shahabad 10½ seers, Saran (Indian-corn) 9 seers, 14 chittaks, Champaran (Indian-corn) 10¾ seers, Muzaffarpur (Indian-corn) 10 seers, Darbhanga (common rice) 9 seers and (Indian-corn) 10 seers, Bhagulpur (common rice) 10 seers per rupee. These figures show a slight rise in Saran, Muzaffarpur, and Darbhanga, and a slight fall in Champaran.

MADRAS.

There was no rain except a few trivial showers in parts: but since the close of the week rain has been general over portions of the Presidency south of Madras, but amounts are not yet fully known. The water-supply continues to decrease and is very deficient in parts of the Circars and Deccan, and it is growing scanty for drinking even in parts; elsewhere the supply is generally fair. Some cultivation is still proceeding under large irrigation works, channels, and wells. The standing crop in the Carnatic, Central, Southern, and West Coast districts is generally in fair condition, and the recent rain should benefit the cotton crop where it is grown in them. The standing crop in the Deccan is drying up. Harvests are proceeding with fair to moderate yield over the southern half of the Presidency, elsewhere they are generally poor or bad. Pasturage is decreasing, but may revive somewhat where rain has fallen. Fodder is generally available, though dear in many places and very scarce in parts of the Deccan. In the latter cattle are suffering; elsewhere they are generally in good condition. Prices have risen in the Circars and in parts of the Deccan, Central, and West Coast districts; elsewhere they are almost stationary or fluctuating irregularly. Prices by which wages are regulated are—Kurnool 13½; Bellary and Anantapur 14; Cuddapah 17; and Ganjam 12½ seers per rupee.

THE FAMINE RELIEF WORKS.

The following was the total number of persons receiving relief in India at the end of February :—

Name of Province.	Preceding Week.			Present Week.		
	Relief Works.	Gratuitous Relief.	Total.	Relief Works.	Gratuitous Relief	Total.
Madras	37,389	10,774	48,163	43,508	11,595	55,103
Bombay ...	348,572	13,126	361,698	342,036	16,402	358,438
Bengal	265,347	101,220	366,567	300,763	134,270	435,033
North-Western Provinces and Oudh	1,126,289	278,247	1,404,536	1,250,258	279,673	1,529,931
Punjaub ...	79,664	26,575	106,239	78,712	30,892	109,604
Central Provinces..	251,796	64,817	316,613	238,299	68,749	307,048
Burmah.....	27,225	5,857	33,082	23,915	5,463	29,378
Berar.....	2,152	...	2,152	5,883	...	5,883
Central India	69,321	4,344	73,665	90,930	4,897	95,827
Rajputana...	24,327	2,819	27,146	19,492	2,348	21,840
Grand Total	2,232,082	507,779	2,739,861	2,393,796	554,289	2,948,085

APPENDIX B

NOTE BY THE HONOURABLE THE LIEUTENANT-GOVERNOR ON THE GHAGGAR CANALS RELIEF WORKS

1. I VISITED the Ghaggar Canals Relief Works on Saturday in company with the Commissioner, the Deputy-Commissioner, Colonel Jacob, Superintendent Engineer, and the officers of the Public Works Department employed on the works, and Dr. Roe, Sanitary Commissioner. We rode down the alignment of the southern canal, seeing the people of two of the camps on that canal at work, and then crossing the Ghaggar came up the alignment of the northern canal and saw the work of two camps there.

2. The workers have come in in numbers, and with a rapidity beyond what was anticipated, and the Public Works Department officers who have charge of all the arrangements, the Commissioner and Deputy-Commissioner exercising only the supervision contemplated by the code, have had a very difficult task in settling such vast numbers down, but in spite of their being very short-handed have succeeded in doing it far better than could have been expected, and everything seems to me to be now on a satisfactory footing, except as regards two important matters, to which I shall presently refer, and which I hope, by giving the Public Works Department officers more assistance, it will be possible to get right.

The arrangements for taking on the new arrivals and setting them to work seem to be good, and no one appears to be kept waiting. The Sanitary Commissioner remained behind when I left, and is to submit a report on the matters with which he is concerned; but so far

as he and I could see as we rode through the works, the people seemed to be in excellent health and good condition, and there was no sickness to speak of except five or six small-pox cases—one a very bad one, in a hospital we visited in the first camp. Dr. Roe is now about to arrange for vaccination. I learned that the people of the neighbouring villages, unlike those round the works in Gujerat, were unwilling to give shelter to the famine labourers, but shelter has been provided for them (and I was told for all of them) under *sirki* thatches, of which each family has one to itself. These thatches are similar to those under which Nuths and other similar wandering tribes ordinarily live, and, though they do not look so well as the regulation huts, a certain number of which have been erected here as in Gujerat, seem to afford sufficient shelter for people of this sort, and are preferred by them.

The supply of food is ample at present, and no difficulty is anticipated on that score.

3. Before I left Lahore the Chief Engineer represented to me that the Public Works Department establishments, which, as already stated, have charge of all the arrangements, could not cope with the work thrown on them, and he suggested that it might be well to confine them to their proper professional work, arranging to have everything else done by district officers and their establishments somewhat as proposed in the note on the Gugera Branch Famine Relief Work, written by Colonel Hutchinson in communication with him. I was inclined to agree with him in this; but when I came to discuss the matter with the Commissioner and Deputy-Commissioner and Colonel Jacob, I found that they were unanimously in favour of continuing the present system, and keeping the actual making of all arrangements in one hand, namely, that of the Public Works Department, and I eventually came to the conclusion that they were right. The fact is, that such things as the classification of labourers, the direction and supervision of the actual performance of the work, and the determination of the question as to how far short work shall be excused, and how far it shall be punished by a reduction of the wage, are matters that are

in practice most difficult to separate from the matters left to the Public Works Department by the Gugera Branch note, and are, moreover, in certain ways more fit to be dealt with by a Public Works Department official than by a district official. I have to-day had an opportunity of discussing the matter further with Colonel Hutchinson and Mr. Beresford, and they now accept this view, and I learn from Mr. Beresford that it is also the view of Colonel Marshall. I would therefore make no change on the Ghaggar Works in this respect. We shall no doubt have to strengthen the hands of the Public Works Department officers very much, and many of the additional staff to be taken on will be men of the class that ordinarily work under district officers; but I agree that they should be all put under the orders of the canal officers.

4. Now as to the two important points in which I found that the arrangements were not satisfactory. They are—

First, that the payment of the labourers is not sufficiently closely supervised; and

Secondly, that the out-turn of work is ridiculously short.

5. As regards the former point, I understand that the Public Works Department officers have been supervising the payment of wages as closely as it was possible for them to do, with the immense amount of other work thrown on them, but it is of course impossible for them to look into the account of every labourer and see that he gets what is due to him. What we want is a number of native officials, who I think, whether they are Public Works Department or Civil Department officials, should be of not lower rank than that of a Tahsíldár or superior Náib Tahsíldár, who would sit down on a section of the work with the muster rolls and reports of work done before them, who would call up the labourers one by one, tell each individual, or the members of each gang, what was due to him or them, and if there were any deductions, why they were made, and then see the money actually handed over. Whether the men who are employed for this work should be a few men specially employed solely on it, and doing it on one section of the

work one day and on another another day, or whether they should be men also employed in supervising work and should discharge this duty only on the particular section of the work which they supervise, I must leave to others to determine. All I insist on is, that wages should be paid in the way I describe in presence of an official of the rank I have mentioned. It is vain to hope that the labourers will get their wages right if the matter of actual payment is left in the hands of a small under-strapper subject to appeal and inquiry if he is accused of malpractices.

6. Then as to the second matter—the low out-turn of work—things are not as bad here as they seem to have been in the North-Western Provinces, where the out-turn amounted to only 4 to 6 cubic feet of earth-work per head per diem, but the out-turn of work is, as I say, ridiculously low. I was told on Saturday that the earth-work done up to this, instead of costing Rs. 2-8-0 per 1000 cubic feet, had cost something like Rs. 15. Now, of course, we all expect to have to pay a good deal more for work done on the famine relief system than for work done by petty contract, and moreover, large allowances must be made for the facts that it takes a certain time to get everything in proper train, that the work here has been going only a short time, and that the labourers have been coming in in larger numbers and with a rapidity which no one expected; but still the result is deplorably bad. I don't mean for one moment to blame the Public Works Department officers for this. I have heard nothing but praise of the energy of Mr. Petter and Mr. Wakefield, who went round the works with us, and Mr. Floyd, under whom they are working, is a man well known and well thought of in the Department.

7. The main cause, so far as I can judge, that has hitherto led to the failure in getting anything like a reasonable task done, is the utterly inadequate provision made for supervision. Any one going over the works can see this. No doubt, as Colonel Jacob pointed out more than once, the majority of the diggers are men unaccustomed to such work, and who could never be expected to do anything approaching a full task; but, as he also observed, they were not setting about the work in the

way they should. I think his impression was that they should be working "against a face," as it would be easy to teach them to do if we had better provision for supervision. Again, we many times observed carriers going off with their baskets not half full. Of course, when the work is measured up and found short, it is possible to reduce the wage if it is not already at the minimum, but it is in the case of a large proportion of the labourers already at the minimum, and even where it is not, the margin for reduction is so small that, especially where a number of the same family are working together, most of them at the lower rates, and earning perhaps ten or eleven annas a day among them, it is scarcely felt. What is needed is to have the work of every gang watched from hour to hour as it proceeds by some responsible man, who would be unencumbered by any clerical work, who would have a short length of the works assigned to him, over which he would be walking back and forward throughout the working hours, and who would show the diggers how to do their work and keep them up to it, who would see that the carriers went away with full baskets, and so on. We all, of course, knew that it would be a very difficult thing to get work done by people like those we have here to deal with on a system which requires us to take on every one who applies for work, and to give him enough to keep him in health, no matter how little work he does; but I don't think any of us realized before *how* difficult a thing it is, and what a very close degree of supervision it would require to get it done.

8. I should feel much obliged if Mr. Beresford and Colonel Marshall would visit the Ghaggar Works together, and devise in concert with Colonel Jacob a proper system of supervision. I have above referred chiefly to the *subordinate* supervision, which struck me as so much wanting, but I may add, that even as it is—and the works are still extending—the two Assistant-Engineers have too heavy a task thrown on them, and it is a question whether there ought not to be four of them instead of two; but I leave all details in the hands of Mr. Beresford, Colonel Marshall and Colonel Jacob. I am anxious that Colonel Marshall and Mr. Beresford

should go down to aid in the settlement of this matter, partly because we have up to this been somewhat unsettled as to the system on which we should work, and partly because the difficulty of getting a reasonable task done has turned out to be much greater than I anticipated, and I accordingly think it is well that the thing should be more fully considered than it has hitherto been.

9. I am aware that it has been suggested that we can never get such work done at anything less than an extravagant cost until we alter our relief work system, so as to attract professional diggers, and that may be true; but I am not prepared to accept it until we have given the relief works system a trial under really effective supervision. Meantime, however, I think that the suggestions made with a view to getting professional diggers on to the works should be considered.

Two such suggestions have been put forward. The first is, that we should let the diggers do as much work as they choose, and be paid for it at a certain rate; but it must be remembered that, though we should undoubtedly get a great deal more work done for the same amount of money by employing professional diggers in this way, each of these professional diggers would have to be paid the wages of about three of the diggers we now employ, and hence we should not by expending that amount of money be keeping so many men alive, and as we are bound to find work to keep alive every one who comes and asks for work, the sum total of our expenditure on famine relief would be largely increased. It may no doubt be that this system would be on the whole more economical. I mean, that under it the difference between the total amount expended on famine relief works, and the total value of the work turned out, would be greater than under the present system, however much improved; but still the fact would remain, that we should have to find a great deal more money, and I do not know what the Government of India might say to that.

In order to enable me to form a clearer idea of how

the matter stands, I should be glad to have, if it is possible to devise a way of making such a calculation, a calculation showing how we should stand after the proposed change as compared with the way we should stand under the existing system if we failed by extra supervision to bring the cost per 1000 cubic feet down below Rs. 15, if we succeeded in bringing it down to Rs. 10, and if we succeeded in bringing it down to Rs. 5. In making any such calculation, it must be borne in mind that the result of substituting skilled diggers for the present diggers is not unlikely to be, that we should have to put most of these latter on some work that would be absolutely useless, for there probably would not be work for them as carriers on the canal, and so far as that would be the case, the wages paid to them on that work would have to be charged to the account of the proposed system in making the comparison.

The other suggestion made is, that we should not go so far as above proposed, but should simply offer a digger four annas per diem if he dug 150 cubic feet. This would be a course intermediate between our present system and the other system just referred to, and the observations above made apply to it also, though to a less extent.

Both suggestions, I may observe, seem to proceed upon the supposition that under the existing system the diggers do not supply sufficient earth to keep the carriers employed, and it is a question how far that is really the case. I cannot venture to offer any opinion after a hurried visit of the sort I made, but I must say, it seemed to me that very commonly it was not the diggers but the carriers who were behindhand.

10. It has been proposed to try the two alternatives suggested on lengths say of 1000 feet of the work, and I will take upon myself to sanction such an experiment without referring to the Government of India; but I trust that it will be remembered that, as I said to the Public Works Department officers on the spot yesterday, the way to get *kudos* over this business is to make the system prescribed by the Government of India work, and yield something like a reasonable out-turn of work

by proper supervision. Any one of course can get full value for money spent on digging if he employs professional diggers and let them earn a full wage.

GHAGGAR CANALS FAMINE RELIEF WORKS

Note by the Chief Engineers, General and Irrigation Branches, Public Works Department.

1. IN accordance with paragraph 8 of his Honour the Lieutenant-Governor's note of January 18, we visited the Ghaggar Canals Famine Relief Works on January 23, in company with Colonel Jacob, R.E., Superintending Engineer. We reached Sirsa with Colonel Jacob by the early morning train of the 23rd, and devoted the greater part of the day to a minute inspection of the works in the two first camps on the southern and northern canal. The 24th, Sunday, was devoted to the discussion with Colonel Jacob and the officers in immediate charge of the works, of various matters connected with the works, and with our observations of the previous day.

2. Two important points are brought to notice in his Honour's note, quoted, viz.—

First, that the payment of the labourers is not sufficiently closely supervised;

Secondly, that the out-turn of work is ridiculously short.

We propose dealing with the second point first, and beginning with an explanation of the system on which the work is being carried out at present and the tasks estimated.

3. The people are divided into gangs of from 80 to 120 under a gangsman, who has a list of the people in his gang entered on the ordinary muster-roll form. The gang is divided into parties of 12 to 18, for each of which there is a representative man that may be called a working mate. This man is one of the diggers

selected by the rest of the party. A party of 12 would have 4 diggers and 8 carriers; in addition there would be the dependents of his party, but these are to be looked on as quite separate. A task of from 85 to 100 cubic feet is laid out as the daily task for each digger, but in the majority of cases it is found that the full task is not performed, that only 50 to 60 cubic feet is excavated, so the party generally receive only the minimum wage. The shortcoming is not so often in lateral dimension as in vertical depth dug, an item which is not so easily checked. In many cases the depth of pit was from 6 to 10 inches only, instead of 12 inches. Sticks 12 inches long are to be given to the working mates to show clearly the depth required.

4. In order to distribute the work in a form that will afford sufficient room and facilitate measurements, the excavation is carried out in strata one foot thick, the irregular surface portion being first removed.

The sub-overseer records the work done by each party in his measurement book, noting the particular 100 feet peg in which the work is situated. A new system of measurement book is being started, in which all the measurements in the same chain or peg will be on one page. In this way it will be easy to compare the total of daily measurements with the final measurement when work is done. At present it is a long process to carry out this check, as the daily measurements are scattered over many different pages of the book. But in three chains tested the result was very satisfactory, as shown below:

SOUTHERN CANAL

Chain.	Final measurement.	Total of daily measurements.	Difference. +	Difference. -
37—38	14,875	14,862	13	...
41—42	13,002	13,406	...	404
43—44	10,200	10,211	...	11

The new arrangement of measurement book will be a powerful check on the sub-overseer's daily measurements.

5. The soil is hard to dig in most places, and the difficulty of digging is further increased by the necessary plan of working in thin layers instead of deep faces, as would be done in ordinary contract work. At present only phaorás are employed; an order has been given to try pickaxes, but the people will probably prefer to work with the tool to which they are most accustomed. Experiments made by Mr. Wakefield show that an able-bodied professional digger can excavate 230 cubic feet of the hard soil near the head of southern canal. Mr. Floyd has been asked to repeat the experiment. There seems to be no reason why the general digger should not do the task of 100 cubic feet. The people at present on the work are on the whole in good condition, and show no signs of emaciation. The women and weaker men are able to carry full baskets weighing 25 seers. A small basketful weighed on the spot gave 12½ seers of earth, and we estimate that the baskets of earth carried average 15 seers or over, to one-fourth of a cubic foot of solid earth.

6. In considering the proper task per head that may be expected, it is necessary to ascertain the task that would be done under ordinary circumstances. The rate allowed for the Ghaggar Canals earth-work, excluding contingencies, is Rs. 2-12-0, 44 annas per 1000 cubic feet. If done by professional diggers and carriers working very hard, the average earnings would probably not be less than 3 annas a day; and allowing the contractor a profit of 10 to 12 per cent., or say 5 annas per 1000 cubic feet, 39 annas would be paid for actual labour. The work would thus have to be done by 13 labourers giving a duty of $\frac{1000}{13}=77$ cubic feet. If instead of professional diggers and carriers only ordinary able-bodied villagers, men and women, are employed, the earnings would not exceed 2 annas a head; $\frac{39}{2}$ = say 19 to 20 hands would have to be employed on every 1000 cubic feet, giving a duty of 50 cubic feet a head. This may therefore, we think, be looked upon as a full day's out-turn under ordinary circumstances on contract work where the soil is hard. The average of 75 cubic

feet laid down in Form B of the Famine Code is therefore obviously too high. The foot-note regarding column 10 is misleading throughout, and should be revised at once. The estimate of one digger and two carriers performing a task of 100 cubic feet, or 33 per head, is a much more practical estimate. This is given as a task in paragraph 11, page 80, Appendix B, Punjaub Famine Code. The present out-turn of work on the Ghaggar Canals per head of people actually employed on digging and carrying is from 15 to 20 cubic feet, and it is expected to increase up to 30 cubic feet.

7. It is found that whatever is dug by one man is carried by two people. It is the digger that fails, and it is now proposed to give the working mate a bonus of 6 pies if he and his small party of diggers perform the task of 100 cubic feet each. At present most of the diggers are strong men of B class. The bonus would mean promoting the working mate to a higher class, and giving him the usual allowance of 3 pies extra for his interested supervision. All the party have an interest in getting the full wage of their class instead of the minimum as at present. It is feared the gangsman is not influential enough to exact a full task out of all the people in the gang. In one case the gangsman was beaten by some of his gang for exacting what they considered too much work. It is hoped that increasing the pay of the working mate in a small party will be the most effective means of increasing the out-turn round. The plan is being tried.

On the Ghaggar Works there appears to us to be no great difficulty in getting diggers in sufficient numbers capable of excavating 85 to 100 cubic feet each, and from our observation two average carriers are able to dispose of the 85 to 100 cubic feet excavated by one digger. It means 50 cubic feet equivalent to a weight of cubic feet $50 \times 55 = 2750$ seers, filling 183 baskets with 15 seers of earth in each on an average. [Strong women and men carry 25 seers, and the smallest child over seven years of age carries 5 seers. The majority can carry 20 seers.] This would mean 30 baskets an hour, or one every two minutes, during a working day of six hours, which is a moderate task.

8. For purposes of comparison and checking work it is necessary to classify the workers as *diggers* and *carriers* only. At present some small children are supposed to be employed on breaking clods. The work is never done by them in practice. These children should be made to carry, or if unable to do this should be classed as dependents. It complicates the case counting them as workers, for they do no useful work, and merely play at clod-breaking, and draw a pay of one anna instead of half-an-anna as dependents.

C. J. FLOYD,
In Charge Ghaggar Canals.

January 24, 1897.

DETAIL OF WAGES PAID ON RELIEF WORKS, GHAGGAR CANALS

Situation of work—Northern Ghaggar Canal, mile 2.
Village—Babbhar.
Tahsil—Sirsa.
District—Hissar.
Distance from Relief Work—Said to be about 12 miles.
Caste—Sweeper.

	Rs.	A.	P.	*Minimum.* Rs.	A.	P.
1. Laloo (father of family)	0	1	9	0	1	6
2. Jeeo (mother of family	0	1	6	0	1	3
3. Sundar (son)	0	1	9	0	1	6
4. Sabo (daughter)	0	1	3	0	1	0
5. Farríd (son)	0	1	3	0	1	0
6. Bhanu (children under 7 years)	0	0	6	0	0	6
7. Lakmera (children under 7 years)	0	0	6	0	0	6
8. Monia (children under 7 years)	0	0	6	0	0	6
Total wages per day ...	0	9	0	0	7	9

Second family from same village, same caste, etc.—

	Rs.	A.	P.
1. Lucknow	0	1	9
2. Nathow	0	1	6
3. Sáhib Zádi	0	1	6
4. Asow	0	1	6
5. Bakhtáwar	0	1	0
6. Chanden	0	1	0
7. Bhaini (under 7 years)	0	0	6
8. Najun (under 7 years)	0	0	6
Total wages per day ...	0	9	3

The number of dependents on the work is now estimated at 22 per cent. of the whole, and we think that if the children were properly classed the proportion under dependents would be increased.

In one large gang of sweepers numbering 126, two families of eight persons were picked out. The details are given on the previous page.

In one case the father, mother, and three children were workers earning from 1 anna 3 pies to 1 anna 9 pies with three small children receiving 6 pies each as dependents, the total daily wage being 9 annas against a possible minimum of 7 annas 9 pies.

In the case of the other family there were only two small children. The daily wage earned was 9 annas 3 pies against a possible minimum of 7 annas 9 pies.

In both cases the members of the family were in good condition and very well clad. Each family is now earning about Rs. 17 to Rs. 18 a month, including pay on Sundays, and might earn more if they worked harder.

These people are from a village some twelve miles from the works. Whole families migrate to our works, and it is impossible under present rules to limit their income. However much we may reduce the pay of the two families referred to above, each will receive 7 annas 9 pies a day. Our only plan is to make the task as hard and to get as much work as we can for the money.

9. Turning now to the cost of the work on which the deduction as to poor out-turn was to some extent based, an analysis of the conditions will show what rate we may reasonably hope to work to, and why the cost is high.

The cost, which, as noted by his Honour, had amounted to something like Rs. 15 per 1000 cubic feet, included preliminary expenditure on hutting, laying out camps, jungle clearance (a heavy item), marking out and levelling roads, etc., etc., which of course swells the rates largely at commencement, but less and less as more earth-work is done. Calculating roughly while we were there, Mr. Floyd estimated that the rate had already fallen to something over Rs. 8 per 1000.

We have not got the actual figures, and it would be well to get them put down at stated periods to test progress.

The rate by contract as an ordinary work would, as shown in paragraph 6 above, be Rs. 2-12-0 for the work now going on at the Ghaggar, and would employ thirteen labourers with an average out-turn of $\frac{1000}{13} = 77$ cubic feet each, and they would earn 3 annas each. But the out-turn which the standard task exacts is in present conditions only 33·3 cubic feet, and the average wage of workers at the Ghaggar is 1·83 annas for a full task. Therefore the cost of actual labour when all do their full task must be $\frac{1000}{33\cdot3} = 30$ labourers at 1·83 annas = 54·9 annas. To this must be added one-sixth, or 16·25 per cent. for Sunday wages, when no work is done, and also work charges (at present about 3·75 per cent.), making the total 66 annas, or Rs. 4-2-0 per 1000. The preliminary expenses will raise this again, and we do not think that a lower rate than Rs. 5 can be attained in existing conditions of wage and standard task if the soil is classed as hard, and under the conditions existing we think it must be so classed.

The present position therefore is that, judging from measurements, our out-turn of work is 15 to 20 cubic feet, instead of 30, as it ought to be, and the cost is a little over Rs. 8 per 1000 instead of Rs. 5, which we might hope to attain to for earth-work alone. The position is not really so serious as the figures previously given led his Honour to conclude.

10. But we have all the same to try and improve matters. We have only two ways open to us for endeavouring to exact a full task—

(1) By making the minimum wage a real hardship, so as to induce the labourers to work well and so avoid being subjected to it;

(2) To increase supervision to an extent which would make it impossible for any labourer to shirk his work.

We do not propose to enter into detail as regards (1) just now, though we think that as now arranged the minimum wage has no deterrent effect on shirkers, and

that it is probable that a more effective use of this deterrent might be made. We will confine our remarks here to the question of supervision.

At present supervision is carried on by the following officers and subordinates :—

Assistant Engineer.
P. W. D. Subordinate (Upper or Lower).
Mistri.
Muharrir.
Gangsman.
Working Mate.

The Working Mate has about a dozen to eighteen labourers (excluding dependents) with him, and gets nothing beyond his famine wage.

The Gangsman has about eight working parties, say 100 to 120 labourers, and gets Rs. 6 to Rs. 8 a month.

The Muharrir has about three gangs, say 300 to 360 labourers, and gets Rs. 10 to Rs. 15 a month.

The Mistri has from 500 to 1000 labourers to look after.

The Public Works Department Subordinate has a whole camp of from 1000 to 3000 labourers.

The Assistant Engineer has four or five camps to look after, and as work expands will have seven or eight camps.

As regards the Working Mate, his duties are apparently easy. We propose as an experiment classing him higher and giving him the usual "mate's" allowance (3 pies) if the task of his party is completed—this to give him a personal interest in keeping them up to the mark.

The Gangsman has custody of the muster-roll and is responsible for tools. He can assist to some extent in enforcing tasks, but his influence is not very great.

The Muharrir is a writer merely, and has enough to do in taking musters and checking rolls.

The Mistri cannot combine much supervision over individual workers or gangs with his proper duties of seeing to levels, correct slopes, lines, etc., but he can assist to some extent.

The Sub-Overseer has to lay out and measure up the work. This he can do for 2000 labourers, and they have about 2000 each to look after, but he can only go

over the ground two or perhaps three times a day, and he cannot be made responsible for seeing that every man works.

To obtain supervision so close as to ensure that no one shall shirk, the responsibility of doing this should rest on a single official, who will remain all day long with the workers. He will have largely to rely on personal influence for effecting his purpose. Fines are already inflicted as far as the minimum wage permits. He cannot beat the labourers; he cannot turn them off; and if they are recalcitrant he must use the powers given under Sections 135 and 138. The best plan would probably be to put on an additional official (Náib Tahsíldár by preference) over each thousand labourers, whose sole duty shall be to stir up the idle and see that full baskets are carried. If this official were paid Rs. 60 a month it would amount to less than 2 per cent. on the pay of the workers. The experiment might be tried.

11. We now come to the other point which his Honour noticed, namely, that the payment of labour is not sufficiently supervised.

The payments at present are made by cashiers, who get from Rs. 35 to Rs. 40 a month, and furnish a security of Rs. 1000.[1] They pay on the nominal rolls as prepared by the Muharrirs the amounts which are certified to by the Sub-Overseer, who checks them by his measurements, and notes fines for short work.

The Sub-Overseer has nothing to do with payment, and the cashier has nothing to do with fixing the amount. We received no complaints of short payment from the work-people, but it is of course possible for collusion to occur, and if we could obtain the services of Tahsíldárs in sufficient numbers,[2] no doubt it would be a good guarantee against malpractices.

But perhaps this may not be found possible, and if so, we would suggest as the next best practical way of gaining our object, that if the official (Náib Tahsíldár)

[1] In the North-Western Provinces and Central Provinces it seems that the payments are made by Gang Muharrirs on Rs. 15 to Rs. 20 a month with no special supervision.

[2] One cashier or disburser is required for every 2000 or 3000 people.

suggested above is entertained he should undertake supervision of payments also. He must not, however, be made responsible for accounts, but merely for watching the payments made. This he could do supposing payments were made once a week (paying one-sixth, or 166 labourers each day), without unduly interfering with his duty of looking after idlers.

On the basis proposed the cost of subordinate supervision would be for 1000 labourers—

	Rs.
1 Náib Tahsíldár, say	60
½ Cashier	20
3 Muharrirs	40
10 Gangsmen	70
1 Mistri	12
½ Sub-Overseer	30
Total ...	232

or 4·3 per cent. on the wages; but in addition to this there would be horse allowance to the Cashier and Sub-Overseer, and share of medical, sanitary, and other miscellaneous establishment, and also of all the superior staff.

J. S. BERESFORD.
G. F. L. MARSHALL.

To His Honour the Lieutenant-Governor.

P.S.—Regarding the apparent inefficiency of the present minimum wage as a deterrent to labourers shirking their task, we think that the power conferred by the last clause of Sections 135 and 138 of the Famine Code might be applied more generally than is the case at present. It is believed that the power is seldom exercised, owing perhaps to a doubt as to the meaning of the word "temporarily," and as to the extent to which the reduction of wage may be carried; but these are matters which must necessarily be left to the discretion of the officers on the spot, who will doubtless remember the necessity for caution when approaching the limit of what is needed to keep the labourer in health and condition.

J. S. BERESFORD.
G. F. L. MARSHALL.

Second P.S. by Mr. Beresford.—Regarding the extent of the reduction, I think the reduction may be in the proportion which the penal ration of Section 170 bears to the minimum ration given in Section 167.[1] Omitting ghi, condiments and vegetables, these rations are as follows—

Minimum Ration—

	Man.	*Woman.*
Flour	16 oz.	14 oz.
Pulse	2 „	2 „
Total ...	18 oz.	16 oz.

Penal Ration—

Flour	14 oz.	12 oz.
Pulse	1 „	1 „
Total ...	15 oz.	13 oz.

In round numbers, I think we may safely say the *penal* is one-sixth less than the *minimum ration.* The average pay earned at present on the Ghaggar Works is 1·83 annas. But a great many receive 1·5, or 1 anna 6 pies, and in their case 3 pies would be the correct reduction to make, reducing their pay to 1 anna 3 pies. In fact, the "penal wage," as I may call it, might be taken all round as 3 pies less than the minimum wage laid down. There is no time to treat each case fully on its own merits in practice, and a rough-and-ready rule is necessary —one that is not too oppressive.

The definition of "temporarily" and "for a time" might be limited to a period of not more than say three days in a week, or some such limit.

J. S. B.

[1] Section 138 states that payment may be made for a time in proportion to work done. I don't think this is acted on in practice.

GLOSSARY OF INDIAN TERMS

Abru . . . . self-esteem, honour
Babu . . . native clerk
Baksheesh . . . gratuity, tip
Bandobust . . . plan, arrangement
Bannias . . . native shop-keepers, grain-sellers, a distinctive caste
Bhiga . . . an Indian square measure, about ⅔ acre
Bhoosa . . . bran
Bilati rhoti . . English bread
Bobachi . . . cook
Bobachikhana . . cook-room
Buggla . . . a native coasting craft
Byle . . . . bullock
Charpoy . . . native bedstead
Chatti . . . native earthen pot
Chobdar . . . Gold or Silver-Stick-in-Waiting
Chota hazri . . little breakfast, or early roll and coffee
Chuddah . . . shawl or blanket
Chuppati . . . a wheaten cake
Chupprassie . . attendant, to go messages, etc.
Dukhankhana . . eating-place
Durbar . . . a state meeting of the officials
Gadi . . . throne
Garrib logue ke-khana poor folks' place, poor-house
Garrib logue . . poor people, lit. quiet or tame folk
Ghaut . . . lit. a step, then pass over hills
Ghindi . . . large copper or brass vessel
Gobra . . . silly, distracted
Gup . . . . gossip
Guru . . . ascetic, anchorite
Hakim . . . doctor
Hathi . . . elephant
Hookum . . . orders
Huzoor . . . Lord protector of the poor, a title of respect employed by natives in addressing a sahib
Jhils . . . . tanks, or swampy marshes

Kafir . . . unbeliever
Karkoon . . . clerk
Khubbar . . . news, information
Khud . . . slope, declivity, precipice
Kiss . . . . land revenue, assessment
Konkan . . . the lowlands opposed to the high table-lands
Lac 100,000
Loot . . . . the proceeds of robbery, the spoil
Mahout . . . elephant driver
Mandap . . . shed
Marwarri . . . money-lender
Nullah . . . a ravine
Panch . . . a council of five
Pan-supari . . betel-leaf which the natives chew; always handed round at native state ceremonies
Patwari . . . head-man of village
Pucca . . . lit. cooked opposed to raw; solid as opposed to cutcha; a pucca house means a stone or masonry house; a pucca road, a metalled road
Puggaree . . . turban
Resai . . . . a wadded quilt
San . . . . commission, or toll
Serai . . . . a rest-house for native travellers; cf. caravanserai
Shikar . . . hunt
Shikari . . . hunter
Sircar . . . ruler
Tahsildar . . . native head officer of a tahsil or circle
Takavi . . . money advance to peasants by Government for land improvements
Taluka . . . sub-district or circle
Tamasha . . . a spectacle, exhibition
Ticcagharry . . a hired vehicle, used in Bombay for the victorias plying for hire
Tiffen . . . luncheon
Zoolum . . . oppression, tyranny
Zubberdustie . . high-handedness


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